

Harry Potter and the Mirror's Gift.



CHAPTER ONE

A new school year has begun. At the start of term feast, Harry is pleased to see that Professor Lupin is back as Defence Against the Dark Arts master. After the feast, he goes to see Lupin in his office, but they are interrupted halfway by Professor Dumbledore.

There was a knock on the door, and Dumbledore came in, looking rather preoccupied.

"I've just received a letter from Professor Bubcek, Remus," he said, hardly seeming to notice that Harry was there. "There's trouble in Kamchatka. He's asked me to help, and asked if you could come too."

Lupin looked surprised. "What sort of trouble?"

Dumbledore looked bemused. "Someone from the dark side appears to be trying to collect followers again. Oleg thinks it's Voldemort, but I don't think..." Dumbledore shook his head thoughtfully, then added, "it seems he's using a demon to help him."

Lupin looked even more surprised.

Dumbledore said, "There's more to it, but no time to explain. It sounds urgent...I'd like to go at once. Will you come?"

"Of course," Lupin said swiftly. He turned to Harry.

"Harry, I have to go...we'll talk another time, shall we?"

"All right," said Harry, rather taken aback, but curious. What could be happening? Was Voldemort back...?

Dumbledore and Lupin had moved over to the centre of the room.

"Portkeys don't work in Kamchatka," Lupin was saying, "because of the volcanoes."

"Yes, and we can't Apparate the usual way from here," replied Dumbledore. "I'm going to open a Vortex."

He lifted his wand. "It's a long distance...I'll have to concentrate a bit harder..."

There was a brilliant flash of light. It filled the whole room, then the room seemed to start to spin, faster and faster...Harry could feel himself being sucked into the vortex. He tried to grab at the door, but was pulled away...everything rushed by in a blur, and he felt himself losing consciousness.

"Harry! Wake up!"

Harry found himself lying on the ground. Professor Lupin was tapping him hard on the face. He slowly opened his eyes.

"Are you all right?" Lupin asked. Dumbledore was standing behind Lupin, watching.

Harry blinked. He felt as if he had been beaten thoroughly with a stick. His whole body ached.

"Fine," he muttered, sitting up. He stared around.

They weren't at Hogwarts any more. The morning sun shone down on him, but the air was cold. Harry shivered. Towering over him was a castle, smaller than the one at

Hogwarts. Harry looked at it, fascinated. It was brightly coloured, but its most distinctive feature was that each tower was crowned with an onion-shaped dome.

The surrounding countryside was a large expanse of bleak, wild-looking forest. In the distance, Harry could see what looked like a line of smoking volcanoes.

Lupin was saying to Dumbledore, "The Vortex sucked him in as well. You have to send him back."

"I can't, today, Remus," Dumbledore replied, with a swift glance at Harry. "The Vortex can only be opened once a day."

Harry slowly stood up. He still felt a bit dizzy.

"Where are we?" he blurted out.

Lupin sighed. "We're in Kamchatka, Harry," he said.

"Kam - what?" said Harry blankly, "where -"

"Russia," said Lupin. "It's a long way -"

He was interrupted by a shout. A wizard was walking briskly up from the castle entrance. He was short and stout, with a long brown beard, and there was a jolly twinkle in his eyes. His robes were a dark grey, and trimmed with fur. A fur cap was perched on his head. For some reason, he reminded Harry vaguely of Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic.

"Albus!" he hailed them. "Remus! And -" he looked at Harry.

"This is Harry Potter, Oleg," said Dumbledore. "I'm afraid he was swept into our Vortex by mistake, as we were coming here. Harry, this is Professor Oleg Bubcek, an old friend of mine."

"Harry Potter! But of course!" cried Professor Bubcek excitedly, peering at Harry's scar, and crushing Harry's hand in his. "What an honour! I've always wanted to meet you! How delightful that -"

"We came at once, Oleg," interrupted Dumbledore. "I think you should brief us immediately."

Professor Bubcek became serious at once.

"Of course," he said gravely, "yes, please come to my office. I'm truly grateful for your help, Albus..." he was leading them to the castle. "...but this is beyond anything I can handle." He turned to Lupin. "Remus...it's good to see you again..."

Harry found himself running to keep up with them, his hand still aching from Bubcek's handshake. His mind was in a whirl. What were they doing here? How had he ended up here? He kept thinking, Ron and Hermione won't believe this...

The interior of the castle was less colourful than the exterior. They passed doors with what looked like name plates on them, but the words were in Russian so Harry couldn't read them. Professor Bubcek led them to his office, where a maidservant brought them drinks. Harry looked at the glass before him with interest; the liquid in it was fiery red.

Lupin looked at Harry and frowned.

"That could well be a bit strong for you, Harry," he observed.

To Harry's chagrin, he said something to the maidservant, who presently returned with a glass of what looked like pink fruit juice.

They sat down around the table, and Bubcek began.

"As I mentioned, Albus, we've been hearing rumours for several years that someone from the dark side has been venturing abroad again, gathering power and trying to recruit people." He looked from Dumbledore to Lupin. "For a long time we dismissed them as rumours. You know what it's like here...the villages are all very isolated, and folk here are very superstitious."

Harry looked at his pink drink. It looked extremely insipid compared to what the rest were drinking.

"Some of the rumours were bizarre," continued Professor Bubcek, "in particular, that this Dark Lord had demons working for him, that the demons would slaughter and drink the blood of those who resisted him."

Harry took a sip of his drink, and almost choked. He felt a burning sensation in his throat. He looked at the others, but they appeared to be listening intently to Bubcek. Lupin's eyes, however, were twinkling.

"Then, a week ago, a messenger came from the village of Tigil," Bubcek went on. "He said that an envoy from the Dark Lord had approached the village elders and tried to seduce them to his side. When they resisted, he attacked them a day later. The messenger said he brought a monstrous beast with him...he said the entire village was slaughtered, and those who didn't flee all perished."

Professor Bubcek shook his head. "I didn't believe him at first...but then I went up to Tigil to have a look. It was true, Albus...the whole village was smoking and in ruins...there were charred bodies still there...and some others, disembowelled - ."

He swallowed. "Then, two days ago, another messenger came, this time sent by the elders from a village near Sedanka...they had just been approached by an envoy as well, perhaps the same one. They too had turned him away, but they were terrified because of what had happened at Tigil. They begged me and the others to come and help defend them, in case they were attacked."

Bubcek looked pale. "Albus, you wouldn't believe it...that night, me and some of the others went up to Sedanka. We went through a nightmare that night...!" He stopped, then continued, almost in a whisper. Harry strained to hear what he was saying.

"Near midnight he came...a man at least seven feet tall...and he had with him a fearsome beast - " he swallowed. "With one wave of his wand, the village burst into flames...the people came running out...and the beast - the beast -"

He gulped down some of his drink to calm himself.

"The beast ran berserk through the village, slaughtering people. It was hideous...people died like flies. We - we tried to save some, but there was mayhem...it was over in minutes, the village ruined, the Dark Lord vanished with his demon..."

"He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named has returned again, Albus, I'm sure of it," whispered Bubcek. "We're powerless against him. That's why I called you - you're the only one who can help us."

Harry took another sip of his drink. This time, the burning sensation wasn't so bad.

Dumbledore frowned.

"From what I know, Oleg, Voldemort is not in the vicinity of Kamchatka. I have spies..."

Bubcek winced at the mention of the name.

"Did the envoy never tell the name of this Dark Lord?" asked Lupin.

Bubcek shook his head.

"No," he said. "They just call him 'The Dark Lord'. And we know - there is only one Dark Lord." He glanced at Dumbledore as he spoke.

"There may be another attack tonight, at Kovran," he added. "That's why I sent for you. You have to help me stop this."

Dumbledore was silent for a while, thinking.

"Oleg, we'll do the best we can," he said at last. "But we need more information. We need to see this beast and find out what it is, we need to see your seven-foot wizard to determine if it is indeed Voldemort..."

Harry had finished his drink. His head was beginning to feel very light.

Lupin looked at Dumbledore.

"You have a plan in mind, I gather," he said.

"The Abdovius charm," said Dumbledore. "I can conceal some of us on this Dark Lord's person. We can accompany him back to his castle as if we were sitting in his pocket or on his shoulder. I would like to determine the extent of his power, and see how many followers he has collected, before deciding on a strategy to combat him."

"How is this charm performed?" asked Harry, intrigued.

Dumbledore turned to him and smiled. "A complex charm. I can perform it for several people, no more than five."

"But you are not coming with us, Harry," said Lupin firmly.

Harry opened his mouth to protest, but Bubcek was already speaking.

"But - what about Kovran?" he said. "We can't let all these people die."

"Evacuate them elsewhere," said Lupin decisively. "At worst, the village can go up in flames. They can rebuild it when they return."

Dumbledore nodded. "We will not attack this Dark Lord tonight, Oleg," he said to Bubcek. "At the moment he does not know we are here. That will work to our advantage when we move on him later."

Bubcek looked at him, then slowly nodded in assent.

"Who will go tonight, then?" he asked, "Just the four of us?"

"Three," said Lupin, "Harry's not coming."

"But - it's Harry Potter!" pointed out Bubcek. "He has defeated He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named before - he - "

Dumbledore looked at Harry's hopeful face.

"No, Oleg," he said gently, "Harry will not be coming. But you can ask one more wizard along. The Abdovius Charm works for five, but four is an easier number to handle."

Bubcek looked disappointed. "I suppose I could ask Atlasov to come," he said.

He rose from the table.

"Tonight, then. I will show you to your rooms."

Harry felt gloomy as he and the others followed Professor Bubcek's maidservant to their rooms. What was the use of being in an adventure where you did nothing? He wished he had brought his Invisibility Cloak along.

His room was a comfortable one, with large, old-fashioned furniture. Harry looked out of the window at the smoking volcanoes in the distance.

"I'll be stuck here till tomorrow, I guess, when they send me back," he said to himself.

There was a large wooden doll with big eyes and rosy cheeks on the table next to the window. It was smooth and rounded, and cylindrical in shape. Its face and arms and clothes had all been painted on. It seemed inanimate at first, then suddenly looked at Harry and spoke.

"Why are you sad?" The doll's voice was high-pitched, like a little girl's.

Harry, who had been looking out of the window, was startled.

"I know why," chirped the doll. "You've got no company. You can open me; there are more of us inside."

Harry peered closer at the doll, and saw a thin groove round her waist. Picking it up, he twisted the top half of the doll, and it came off. The doll was actually hollow, and nested inside was another smaller, identical doll.

"You can open me, too," chirped the smaller doll.

Harry opened the smaller doll. There was another even smaller one inside. He assumed that eventually the dolls would become so small that there wouldn't be any more inside, but after opening around thirty he realised they weren't actually getting any smaller. There was now a small sea of dolls surrounding him, and they were all talking to each other in high, twittering voices.

At this moment, someone knocked on the door. The dolls all squeaked in fright, and to Harry's alarm they suddenly jumped into the air and flew toward him like a swarm of bees. Instinctively, he lifted the remaining doll he was holding up in front of him, to ward them off, before he realised they weren't attacking him. One by one, they flew straight toward the doll in his hand and disappeared inside it. In a twinkling, the room was empty of dolls, and the doll in his hand was suddenly wooden and inanimate again.

Harry put the doll back on the table and then went and opened the door. It was Professor Bubcek.

"Just came to see if you're comfortable, Harry, and get acquainted a bit," he said cheerfully.

"Oh - er - of course," said Harry, surprised, and let him in. He glanced at the doll, but it remained silent. "The - the room's very nice," he added, politely.

Bubcek seemed a bit nervous.

"May I sit down?" he inquired, and lowered his portly frame into a chair. Harry sat down on the bed.

Professor Bubcek seemed to have something on his mind, but didn't quite know how to start saying it.

"Harry," he began at last, "please do not think me forward, but - such a coincidence - it seems a godsend - I hope you won't mind if I speak my mind."

Harry felt rather apprehensive. "Not at all," he said politely.

"Well, the fact is," said Bubcek, his beard twitching a bit, "it seems providential to me that you came along - as a matter of fact, I believe it was fated."

He stopped, and looked meaningfully at Harry. Harry stared blankly back.

Bubcek continued, "You are the only one who has ever defeated He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named! You are exactly the person we need to aid us in our quest now! No, it was no accident you came here - destiny has sent you here to help us, in our moment of need."

"Professor Bubcek - " began Harry.

"I tell you, it is so." Bubcek looked furtively around, as if he might be overheard, then leaned forward and said in a whisper, "Tonight, you must come with us."

"But Professor Lupin - "

"Remus, as your teacher, is understandably anxious about your safety," said Bubcek, waving a hand impatiently. "But his concern for you blinds him to the bigger picture - "

There was a knock at the door.

"Harry?" It was Lupin's voice. "Are you there?"

Bubcek panicked.

"Quick!" he hissed at Harry, thrusting something in his hand. "Take this. If you wear it, it will make you invisible."

Harry found himself clutching a small amulet on a chain.

"Think about it," whispered Bubcek urgently. "Remember, Harry, the lives of all those villagers depend on you."

Lupin knocked on the door again.

"He's coming, Remus, I was just having a chat with him," called out Bubcek, opening the door.

Harry hastily stuffed the amulet into his robes.

Lupin looked from Bubcek to Harry.

"I hope I'm not interrupting -" he began.

"Oh no, no, no, indeed," said Bubcek, "just popped by, just getting acquainted with Mr Potter here, so exciting, you know, to have a chance to meet him."

His face had gone rather pink. "Well, I must be off," he puffed. "I did enjoy our chat," he said to Harry. "Think about what I said, won't you? " - to Lupin - "I'll see you, Remus," and he disappeared out the door.

Lupin looked slightly suspiciously after him, then closed the door and turned to Harry.

"He just came to ask if I liked my room," said Harry, trying not to look guilty.

"Oh?" said Lupin, raising an eyebrow. Then, seeing Harry's face, he smiled.

"I know this is all a bit confusing to you, Harry," he said kindly, "but it doesn't really concern you, you know. Tomorrow, first thing in the morning, Professor Dumbledore will send you back to Hogwarts."

"But -" said Harry. "I'd like to help. I mean - maybe it wasn't a coincidence I came along; maybe there's something I could do." He looked hopefully at Lupin.

Lupin shook his head slightly. His expression was stern.

"Tonight, I want you to promise me you'll stay in this castle," he said, looking intently at Harry. "Don't even think of trying to follow us -"

"I wasn't -" protested Harry.

"The magic in this part of the world is slightly different from that at Hogwarts," continued Lupin. "True, the majority of the people here are simple folk, with only rudimentary knowledge of magic. But there are also some wizards who are well versed in the magical arts, and they can be very dangerous indeed."

He looked at Harry seriously. "Some of them don't even need wands to do advanced magic, Harry. It would be foolish to provoke them or cross their path. Promise me you'll stay in this castle, if possible, this room, tonight."

Harry looked at him.

"You've been here before," he said. It was a statement, not a question.

Lupin looked surprised.

"I have, a while ago," he answered. "I did some research here after I left Hogwarts. That's why I know Professor Bubcek. He's the Director of this Institute."

"Do you know any of the local magic? The type that doesn't need wands?" asked Harry, intrigued.

Lupin looked stern again.

"I know a little," he said shortly. "But not much. In fact, from what Professor Bubcek says about this new Dark Lord, the magic we might require here could well be beyond anything I could contribute. I believe Professor Dumbledore only asked me to come because I'm familiar with this place, and because I know Professor Bubcek."

He got up to go. "This magic is dangerous, Harry," he repeated. "Don't think of trying to learn any of it. It can be fatal to play with it, especially while you are still not yet a fully qualified wizard."

CHAPTER TWO

After Lupin had left, Harry tried on the amulet. It made him invisible the moment he placed it round his neck, and he found it more convenient to use than his Invisibility Cloak. He spent the rest of the afternoon with the amulet on, hanging around the landing outside his room, and peering down the stairs through the banisters at the others. He retreated into his room whenever anyone on his level approached, in case they knocked on his door and found he wasn't there. There seemed to be a lot of activity in the castle, people running up and down, owls flying in and out.

He wanted badly to follow the others that evening, but knew his presence would be more of a hindrance than a help.

At around five in the evening, Dumbledore and the others gathered in the hall below. With them was another wizard, whom Harry had overheard was Vladimir Atlasov, another of the wizards at the Institute. He was tall and dark, with shifty eyes and a small black moustache. Harry didn't like him very much.

Harry watched miserably as they started leaving.

"It's not fair," he muttered to himself. "It's even worse being here and doing nothing, than if I had stayed on at Hogwarts."

He started; one of the party had returned. For a wild moment, he hoped it was Lupin, coming back to say he could come; but then he saw it was Atlasov. Tall and shifty-eyed, he came bounding up the stairs.

Harry hastily retreated to a corner. Atlasov looked furtively around, then knocked on a nearby door. The maidservant who had served them drinks opened it.

Harry crept nearer to listen.

"I have decided, I am with you," he heard Atlasov say. "Send an owl to Lord Deorg for me. Tell him, tonight, I will spy on these foreigners and let him know what they are up to. Let me know if I should kill them." He nodded curtly at her, then bounded down the stairs again.

Harry stood petrified for a moment. Then, taking his wand out, he swiftly went and knocked on the maidservant's door.

She opened it, parchment in hand, but was confused to see no one there.

"Petrificus Totalus!" said Harry, pointing his wand at her. She dropped to the floor, unable to move. He quickly dragged her to his room, and put her under the bed where no one would see her. Then he locked the door and sped down the stairs after Atlasov.

Dumbledore and the others were waiting for Atlasov in a truck filled with large turnips. Harry ran, panting, up to it, and managed to scramble in just as the truck rose up into the air.

Professor Bubcek shouted something in Russian to the driver, as the truck rose high above the castle. All at once, the truck and its occupants disappeared. It was eerie; Harry could feel the turnips under him, and the vibration of the truck, but all spread out below him he could see the land that was Kamchatka. Stretches of forest were visible to him, and the shining sea glinting in the setting sun. But the vast majority of land seemed to be smoking volcanoes, stretching in a sharp spine to the horizon.

Lupin must have been looking at the scenery too, because Harry heard his voice over the motor of the truck. "It's as beautiful as I remember it to be."

Professor Bubcek chuckled. "Yes, the view from this truck never changes."

"It's still the same old truck," said Lupin. "I'd have thought you'd have a new one by now."

"I take it that this is your main form of transport here," said Dumbledore.

"No, no, we only use it for missions to the interior," said Bubcek. "Every village is bound to have some turnip trucks around, so we can just leave it and come back later when we're done."

Harry heard Lupin laugh. "It's much better than the coastal missions, though!"

"Yes, indeed," said Bubcek. "We have to use a truck full of fish when we go to the sea coasts," he explained to Dumbledore. "A turnip truck would look out of place there. Remus never liked the smell much."

"I found a spell to remove the smell," said Lupin, "but Professor Bubcek thinks that a truck of fish that doesn't smell would raise suspicion."

Atlasov remained silent throughout the conversation. Harry wondered if he should expose him immediately, but fighting up in the sky when you were in an invisible

truck - and when your enemy was invisible too - didn't seem a very practical thing to do, so he decided to wait.

After what seemed like several hours - during which it got colder and colder, and darker and darker - they started to descend, finally landing in a small clearing near the village of Kovran.

The truck rematerialised. The others stiffly got out. Harry waited for them to go first, squeezing himself in a corner and hoping no one would bump into him.

Professor Bubcek was the last to leave. He glanced at Dumbledore and the others to make sure they weren't watching, then looked around the empty truck.

"Harry?" he whispered, "are you there?"

"Yes, I'm here," Harry whispered back from his corner.

Bubcek beamed.

"Excellent! Excellent! Now, just follow along behind us," he said softly.

"Oleg? Are you coming?" It was Dumbledore.

"Coming, coming, Albus," called Bubcek.

Harry followed them into the village. The streets were largely empty, but light issued from the houses and Harry could see frightened faces at some of the windows.

Lupin looked angry.

"I thought the village was to be evacuated!" he said to Bubcek.

Professor Bubcek looked anguished.

"There's nowhere for them to go, Remus," he explained, looking guiltily at Lupin and then at Dumbledore. "No other village will take them in; they're afraid the Dark Lord will follow them there. And the forests here are too cold at night, and full of strange beasts."

Dumbledore looked perturbed.

"We have put protective spells on all the houses," said Atlasov, speaking for the first time.

"That may not be enough - " began Lupin, but Atlasov cut him short.

"It is enough," he said coldly. "Our magic here is stronger than that of you foreign wizards."

"I assure you, Remus, the villagers should be safe," said Bubcek nervously.

Lupin gave Atlasov a hard stare, then turned to Bubcek and said, "Now what?"

"We wait," said Dumbledore grimly. "As I understand," - turning to Bubcek - "there's only one road to the village."

"Yes, yes," said Bubcek. "I had someone look around for me earlier." - pointing - "We can station ourselves at a small clearing over there."

They got in position and waited. It seemed like hours to Harry. He was in an agony of mind, wondering if he should expose Atlasov. But he realised he had no proof - Atlasov could say he was lying.

Then, after what seemed an eternity, there was a faint howling in the distance.

"What was that?" said Lupin, sharply.

Harry's stomach lurched. Coming up the road was a huge figure, hooded and cowed in black. It had a whip in its hand; in its other hand was a leash, which controlled the huge beast it was driving in front of it.

Harry had never seen such an animal before. It was black, and foam issued from its mouth. Harry had a glimpse of gleaming fangs as the creature raised its head in a snarl. Its body was like that of a panther, but more massive. There was a mad light in its eyes. It was thrashing from side to side, as if trying to free itself.

Lupin and the others were watching too, transfixed.

"I think I recognise..." said Dumbledore softly, but Lupin interrupted.

"Look at that!" he said sharply.

The beast had suddenly turned around and leapt at the cowed man. Sparks issued from the man's wand, and the animal howled in pain. It lurched around as if in a fit. Harry felt a surging force in his own mind.

"Did you feel that?" said Lupin softly. "He's controlling the animal. He's possessing it with his mind."

The cowed man and animal passed without seeing them, and entered the village. Harry saw the man raise his wand.

There was a flash, and the houses burst into flames. Harry could hear screams, and the villagers flooded out into the streets in a panic.

The cowed man gave a loud, cold laugh. He removed the leash and slashed at the beast with the whip.

"Kill them!" His voice was cold and deep.

The beast screamed, and bounded at the villagers, swiping at them with its claws. The cowed man lifted his wand and pointed at those trying to flee. One by one, with amazing speed, they were struck down.

"They're being slaughtered!" Lupin shouted, taking out his wand. But Dumbledore laid a hand on his arm.

"I'm sorry, Remus," he said firmly, "but we have to let Kovran go. We cannot let our presence here be known yet. You know that."

Lupin looked Dumbledore in the eye, then turned away, looking rather sick.

It was over in a sickeningly short time. The cowed figure pointed his wand at the beast. It shrieked, but came to him, and the metal collar snapped around its neck again.

"They're coming back," said Dumbledore, suddenly tense. "It's now, or never! Quick, hold hands!"

They joined hands. Professor Bubcek was at one end. He was looking at Dumbledore, but held out his free hand to his side. Harry, who had been keeping near him, hastily took hold of it, and gasped as Bubcek's iron grip closed on it.

He heard Dumbledore saying, "As they pass, choose one part of his person and fix your gaze on it."

Harry locked his gaze on the left shoulder of the approaching figure.

But, as the figure approached, the animal in front of it suddenly shrieked again. Wheeling around, it leapt at the cowled man.

Distracted, Harry's gaze fell on the beast. Too late, he heard Dumbledore saying, "Now..."

The world seemed to whirl around for a second, then when it came to, Harry found himself a few feet off the ground. There was a horrible snarling in his ears.

He glanced down. His own body had disappeared. He seemed to be looking down from the beast's right shoulder. All at once, he became aware of the others' consciousness; Dumbledore seemed to be watching from the top of the man's hood. Lupin was on the left shoulder, Bubcek on the left arm. Atlasov was somewhere on the man's chest.

Harry could hear Bubcek's voice in his mind; he sounded faintly worried.

Do you think he can hear us thinking? The question was obviously aimed at Dumbledore.

No, Harry heard Dumbledore reply, That's the beauty of the Abdovius Charm...it's very subtle. He paused, then - But there's someone else here -

Harry felt Dumbledore's mind reach out to his. So did Lupin's. He steeled himself.

Harry! Lupin sounded furious. What are you doing here?!

It's all right, Remus, I brought him - Professor Bubcek sounded apologetic.

A light flashed, and the world seemed to start spinning. The cowled figure was Apparating from the place.

Professor Lupin, Atlasov is going to betray us! Thought Harry frantically. I heard him say so before you left - you have to believe -

His mind felt a sudden pain, as Atlasov unleashed his mind on him. Then, it was gone. Through the whirling, Harry was vaguely aware of Lupin struggling with Atlasov, and also Dumbledore's mind gently probing his, checking his memory.

It's true, he heard Dumbledore saying, Harry heard a conversation on the stairs -

There was a jerk, and then Atlasov's consciousness suddenly vanished from Harry's mind.

Headmaster, he's gone, he heard Lupin say, he went berserk. I overdid it ... I haven't done this for a long time...

The whirling had stopped. They must have reached the cowled man's abode. From his perch on the beast's shoulder, Harry could see stone walls, and stairs leading downward. The cowled figure was whipping the animal, driving it down. Harry could feel the creature jerk with each whipstroke.

They reached what looked like an underground cave, two guards on either side of its mouth, which was fitted with barred metal doors.

The cowled man drove the beast inside.

"You've been disobedient today," he said in a soft, cold voice. "A punishment is in order...but later...I have business to attend to now."

He turned, and strode out of the cave. The guards shut the door with a clang.

Stay there, Harry, he heard Dumbledore say in his mind, We'll come and get you later.

The beast padded to one corner of the cave, and sat down. Harry's heart sank.

"I always seem to mess up," he thought to himself. "Goodness knows how long I'm going to be stuck here."

He was suddenly aware of an odd, shrinking sensation. In the dim light from the door, the beast seemed to be getting smaller...its fur was disappearing...

The shrinking stopped. Harry glanced down, and was startled.

He could see an arm and a leg, and part of a body wearing rags. He glanced up and saw long, black matted hair, and a glimpse of a face.

"It's a girl," he thought in shock. "The beast...it's an Animagus!"

The girl sobbed slightly as she shifted her position, then slowly lifted the metal collar, now too big for her, from around her neck. She threw it to the floor with a clang. Then she suddenly gave a start, as if surprised. She brushed several times at her right shoulder, then gave it a slap. Although Harry knew he wouldn't feel anything, his mind winced. Then, to his alarm, he felt her mind reaching out to his own.

He tried to think of nothingness, to pretend he wasn't there. After a while, she stopped probing. She sat and seemed to be thinking.

It happened very fast. There was a loud pop! and Harry suddenly found himself on the ground next to the girl. The stench in the cave hit him all at once. He scrambled up in alarm, gagging slightly, and retreated a few steps.

She was leaning forward, in a crouching position, looking for him. He realised he was still wearing the amulet.

She looked around.

"Show yourself," she said softly. "I know you're there."

Harry kept silent. If he could just avoid her long enough, till Dumbledore came...

She waited. Then, when Harry said nothing, she moved.

Harry watched, panic mounting within him. She was growing bigger...long, shaggy fur was appearing...two small eyes...

It was a bear. Harry gaped at it. How could she - ?

The bear came toward him, sniffing.

"It can smell me!" he thought in alarm. There was no choice; he quickly took the amulet from around his neck.

All at once, the bear was gone. The girl was there again, instead. Harry stood there tensely, watching her. She must be some sort of shape-shifter. In the darkness of the

cave, she looked rather alarming. There was no telling what creature she might turn into next.

She looked at him a while, then asked, "Who are you?"

"Ha - Harry P-Potter," said Harry, stammering slightly.

"Are you?" she said softly. There was a soft, crackling noise, and she was holding a handful of flames. As they illuminated her dirty face, he saw, with some surprise, that she looked Chinese.

She was taller than him. Bending over slightly, she held the flames near his face, looking at his scar. Her face had a slightly sullen and brooding expression, but her eyes were dark and watchful.

"Harry Potter. So you are," she said, lowering her flames. She stood back, and looked at him.

"Why are you here?" she asked, quietly.

All at once, he heard Dumbledore's voice in his head.

Harry, why are you back in your body? Are you all right?

Yes, he thought back. Professor Dumbledore - the beast - it's a girl -

He's coming to whip her, warned Dumbledore. Hide yourself!

Footsteps were approaching the cave. The girl whipped around, then hissed at him, "hide!"

Harry flung the amulet round his neck. The doors opened. The cowled wizard was back.

"Three times, she attacked me today," he said in his cold voice to the guards. "Give her a hundred."

The guards approached the girl. She retreated, then suddenly lifted her arms.

Harry felt the force of the cowled man's mind surge out.

"No, you don't," he said softly. "I want you whipped as a human, not an animal."

She screamed. The guards roughly chained her to the ground, her back to the ceiling. One started whipping her, counting each stroke.

The cowled man laughed as she screamed. "Scream, scream for mercy," he said softly, in a voice that sent shivers down Harry's spine. "I've kept you here three years, and you've never begged for mercy yet. I would like you to, just this once."

Harry clenched his fists. Shape-shifter or not, she was still human. Hands shaking, he felt in his robes for his wand.

Harry! Dumbledore said in his head. Do NOT -

They're whipping her! Thought Harry in fury.

Dumbledore's voice sounded harshly in his head. We must not give ourselves away, or everyone will die, including the girl!

Harry watched hopelessly. Fifty-four - fifty-five - .

She had stopped screaming. She lay on the ground, unmoving.

"Stop!" barked the cowled man. The guard lowered his whip.

"We want her alive," snapped the cowled man. "Milkovo too have resisted me. I need her to destroy them for me tomorrow night."

He turned, and left the cave. The guards unchained the girl, leaving her lying limp on the ground. The doors clanged shut again.

Harry crept over to her. She was still breathing, but blood was running down her back, soaking the rags she was wearing.

Harry took his handkerchief out to staunch the blood. It was soaked in no time. He tore off part of his robe and used that.

"I need to wash the wounds," he thought, looking around for water. He muttered, "Lumos!" to his wand, and light sprang from it. He wandered around the cave, but the pool of water at one end was stagnant. He shuddered, and gagged at the stench, wondering how anyone could stay here. How long had she been here? Didn't the man say three years -

He started at a sound. The girl was moaning; she seemed to have regained consciousness.

Harry went quickly over to her. "Are you all right?"

She sat up, but her wounds were hurting her and she was crying with pain. Harry desperately wished Madam Pomfrey was there.

Harry! It was Dumbledore. Is the girl all right?

She's alive, Harry thought back. But she's hurt -

Help her if you can, said Dumbledore. We're taking a look around here. We'll come and get you when we're ready. And then he was gone.

Presently she stopped sobbing, and looked wearily at him. She started to speak, but stopped, her eyes fixed on something behind him.

Harry turned around. In one far corner of the cave, something was glowing. He turned back to the girl, and saw that she was looking at him.

"The mirror is awake," she said, in a tired voice. "It doesn't wake very often, these days." She started to get up, painfully. "You may come and look at it, if you like."

Harry started forward.

"You're hurt - " he gave her an arm, to support her.

She shrank back. "I'm filthy," she said.

"It's all right," said Harry, gently.

They stumbled slowly over to the mirror.

"Don't worry," the girl said quietly, when he worried about her wounds. "Deorg will heal me before the next outing. It always happens."

"Is that his name -" began Harry, but they had reached the mirror.

It was as tall as a man, and square in shape. It had a simple silver frame, from which a soft sparkling light issued, as if starlight had been trapped within. The mirror itself

was glowing, lights in different shades of blue. The slime that covered the rest of the cave had not touched it.

"How did this get here?" asked Harry, almost too surprised to speak. It seemed ludicrous that such a beautiful object could be found in such a stinking cave.

"I don't know," said the girl, wearily. "It was here when I first came. I don't know if Deorg knows about it. Perhaps he allowed it to remain here, to keep me sane."

Harry didn't understand. "What do you mean -" he began, but she had reached out a hand, and laid it gently on the mirror's polished surface.

She held it there for a while, as if listening, then turned to him.

"It wants to show you something," she said, surprise in her voice. She looked at him curiously, then moved aside, saying, "Stand here, and put your hand to the glass."

Harry hesitated, wondering if it was a trap, then did as she said. The mirror felt very cold. It shimmered at his touch, and the lights in it began to spin.

"You may take your hand away now," said the girl softly.

Harry removed his hand. The lights had disappeared. Images began to appear...blurred at first, then clearer. To his surprise, Harry recognised his parents. That was his father...and his mother...they looked very young...and the place...was it Hogwarts?

The images flashed by. Scenes from his parents' lives...their wedding...his mother holding him as a baby...

Harry began to tremble. The scene he feared most was approaching. His parents' death -

"I won't look," he thought, his heart beating fast. "I'll close my eyes -"

But his eyes remained glued to the mirror. Images began to rush as if the mirror were in a hurry. It happened very fast - almost nothing but a flash of green light -

And then he saw three people outside the Dursleys' home: surely - yes, it was Dumbledore, Professor McGonagall, - and Hagrid! And there was a basket on the doorstep. What was in it - was it a baby?

Harry felt a lump in his throat. The girl stood next to him, also watching intently.

Scenes from his own life flashed past...escaping from Dudley's bullying...his first meeting with Hagrid...his life at Hogwarts...quidditch matches...himself with Ron and Hermione...

Then the images slowed down and the mirror went dark. He saw a tower, silhouetted against a full moon. Dimly superimposed was the image of a wolf, raising its muzzle to the sky and howling. Then they were rushing inward toward the tower, it seemed as if they would smash into it -

The mirror blurred, then became focussed. It was still night; Harry saw himself standing in a dimly lit corridor with some others: Ron, Hermione, and ... was it Neville Longbottom?

Harry watched, transfixed. They looked older; his image self was taller and Neville looked as if he had lost some weight. Something must have happened - Neville was sobbing away. Hermione had tears in her eyes, and Ron looked sober.

As for himself, he was reading a letter. Harry peered closer. The others faded out of the picture, leaving himself alone standing there with the letter. He seemed to be thinking. And then...

His image self took something out of his robes, and looked at it. Then, he turned and looked at Harry, and started walking toward him.

Harry gulped. He shot a glance at the girl, next to him. She was still watching intently, her eyes bright.

Harry's image self had stopped in front of him. He looked gravely at Harry, then held out the object in his hand to him. It looked like a bottle.

Harry felt a stab of fear. Should he take it?

"He's giving you the bottle," said the girl. She looked at him in wonder. "Take it," she urged him softly.

Harry hesitated, then reached his hand out.

But as his hand touched the mirror, the image crackled as if with static, like a badly tuned television set. When it had stabilised, his image was still standing there, looking puzzled.

With a sober face, the image offered the bottle to him again. Harry put out his hand. The image crackled again.

"It's no use," said Harry, shaking his head, "maybe it's a trick -"

His image had settled again. This time, the image turned and looked at the girl. She shrank back a bit, looking frightened.

The image held out the bottle to the girl, and indicated that she should give it to Harry.

Her eyes widened. Then she slowly reached her hand out to the mirror. When she drew it back, the bottle was in her hand.

The image, now empty-handed, looked soberly at them. Then, with a quick nod at Harry, he blurred and faded.

"Wait!" said Harry, but the image was gone. The mirror was flashing its spectrum of blue light again.

Harry turned to the girl. She was looking at the bottle. It was small and round, and it contained a fine, sparkling dust, like tiny stars.

The girl looked at Harry, then held out the bottle to him.

"It's amazing," she murmured, "all the while I've been here, it's never given me anything."

Harry turned the bottle around in his hands. The dust inside swirled around, as if it had a life of its own.

"But - what is it for?" he said, confused. "How do I use it?"

"I'll try asking," she said, placing her hand on the mirror again, her eyes still fixed on the bottle.

She was quiet a while, listening, then slowly removed her hand. The mirror flickered for a few moments, then went dim. Another flicker, and it looked nothing more than a normal mirror again. In the darkness of the cave, it could hardly be seen.

The girl was looking at Harry, puzzled.

"What?" said Harry urgently. "What did it say?"

She stared at him.

"It said," she said slowly, as if trying to remember the exact words, "that 'the dust is a gift for you'." She took a breath. "It said,

'One second chance will this stardust give,
When one lies dead who deserves to live.
If you sprinkle the dust on one who is true
What death has taken will return to you.'"

Even while listening intently to her words, it struck Harry how odd all of this seemed. He had just seen this girl kill a village full of people. And yet here she was now, standing quietly in the dim light of the cave, reciting a poem to him. She seemed to have forgotten about her wounds, and there was a curious expression in her eyes, half-excited, half-fascinated.

He asked her to repeat the verse again, trying to commit the words to memory. A dozen different questions then came into his mind.

"What does it mean?" he asked, staring at the bottle. "Who will die? Why is it for me? Why couldn't I take it from the mirror?"

She looked thoughtfully at the bottle for a while.

"I don't know," she answered. "Perhaps...perhaps the dust will revive any person who has died." She raised her eyes to look at him. "Perhaps the mirror has given a second chance to you...it seems to know the life you've had, - that you've lost your parents...Maybe it's a chance to bring back someone you love, even..."

Her voice trailed off.

"Even what?" said Harry, his mind whirling.

"You might go back in time," she said softly, "to your parents - you know, when they just died..." She shook her head suddenly, and said quickly, "But I'm only speculating - " She stopped abruptly, as if she realised she had said enough.

Harry felt very queer. He remembered the time-turner Hermione used to have. Was it possible? Could he ever bring his parents back?

"But if the mirror never gave you anything, what do you see when you look in it?" he suddenly asked her.

At that moment, he heard a voice in his head.

Harry! It was Dumbledore. It's time to go.

Wait! Thought Harry frantically, Not yet -

But the cave had begun to spin around him. He could see the girl revolving by, a surprised expression on her face...he thought he should reach out and pull her along, but the whirling was too fast -

Harry opened his eyes. He was back outside the Institute. The air was bitterly cold, and the eastern sky was just beginning to brighten. Professors Dumbledore, Lupin and Bubcek were standing around, looking at him.

"Are you all right?" Lupin asked.

Harry jumped up.

"The girl - the girl in the cave - we've got to get her out!" he said to Dumbledore.

The expression in Dumbledore's eyes was kind.

"So we will, Harry," he said. "I promise you we will."

"We can get her out now," Harry said insistently. "You can get her out, like you just brought me here."

Dumbledore looked more sober now.

"No, Harry," he told him, "It's not the right time now."

"But she's hurt!" protested Harry. "Didn't you see how they whipped her?"

Lupin nodded grimly, looking sick.

"Tonight, Harry," he said. "we're going to - "

"But is it wise to save the girl?" a new voice interrupted.

They turned around. A tall, broad-shouldered wizard was standing there, together with a few others. Harry assumed they must be from the Institute, they were all dressed like Professor Bubcek.

"This girl - this shape-shifter...there must be evil in her," continued the wizard. "If what we hear is true, she's the one who has been killing hundreds of villagers, from Siberia all the way to here."

Harry opened his mouth to reply, but Lupin spoke first.

"That may be so, Dorek," he said, "but the girl herself had no say in the matter. Lord Deorg has been controlling her."

The wizard's face hardened. "Be that as it may be," he said stubbornly, "What sort of person can turn into a killing monster like that? Even without the Dark Lord, she can still transform and harm people anytime. I say, we should get rid of her as well."

The other wizards murmured in agreement.

"No, you can't!" said Harry indignantly. "She's just like any of us, I've met her..."

"She's bewitched you, boy," sneered the wizard, but Professor Bubcek hurriedly interrupted.

"I suggest we go back inside, where it's warmer," he puffed, "and Harry can tell us what he saw. We must also discuss our strategy."

Dorek and the other wizards led the way into the castle. Harry stared at them from behind. He decided he wouldn't tell anyone about the mirror yet. The mirror's gift seemed personal, and he didn't really care for any of the Russian wizards to know about it.

"There's nothing much to tell, actually," he said to Bubcek as they entered the castle. "She was hurt and bleeding, and I tried to staunch the flow. I talked to her a bit. She didn't try to hurt me or anything. Then I came back here. That's all."

He looked round at Lupin and Dumbledore as he said this. Lupin looked thoughtfully at Harry.

"What did you talk about?" he asked.

"Oh - er, nothing much," said Harry. "She asked my name, and I told her, and then - then they came to whip her. After that she was bleeding, so we didn't talk much. She just said not to worry about the wounds, that - that person - Deorg - would heal them before the next attack."

Professor Bubcek looked a bit green.

"Barbaric!" he muttered.

"You did very well, Harry," said Dumbledore. "Now, have something to eat, and then take a good rest."

"And then it's back to Hogwarts for you," added Lupin.

"What?" said Harry, appalled. "You're not sending me back after this, are you? Please let me stay," - appealing to Dumbledore - "There must be something I can do, to help."

Lupin and Dumbledore looked at each other.

"I think, Remus, he should stay," said Dumbledore at last. "Opening the Vortex is going to drain me of resources I would prefer to keep for tonight. Besides," he glanced at Harry, who was listening anxiously, "he has struck up a rapport with the shape-shifter. That may prove useful. He could, I should think, provide you valuable assistance when you tackle her, tonight."

"Me?" said Lupin, looking startled. "Tackle the shape-shifter? You mean, together with the others, of course." He indicated the other wizards.

Dumbledore smiled at Lupin, and his eyes were twinkling.

"Actually, Remus, I thought you might do it alone," he said. "The rest of us will be concentrating our efforts on Deorg. Once we have broken his hold on her, it only remains for you to calm her down till her mind is restored enough to transform back."

Lupin was silent a while. "I suppose that can be done," he said, thoughtfully.

"Who is this Deorg?" asked Harry. "It's not Voldemort, is it?"

Professor Bubcek winced on hearing the name.

"No, Harry," said Dumbledore. "Deorg used to be an ally of Voldemort, but broke away because he wanted his own power."

He glanced at Bubcek, who was still looking shaken, then continued.

"While you were with the shape-shifter - I don't suppose you asked her name?"

"Er - no," said Harry, flushing slightly.

"No matter," said Dumbledore, smiling. "Anyway, while you were with her, we had a look around Deorg's fortress. Outside Kamchatka, his magical powers, though strong, are not as strong as Voldemort's, so he has been collecting a physical army. His power, it seems, lies in his mental abilities to possess people. He has collected quite a sizeable army of mostly simple village peasants, over these few years. Once we break his hold on them, the soldiers should come out of their trances, and return to their homes."

"How are you going to do that?" asked Harry.

"Tonight, when Deorg attacks Milkovo, some of us will attack him, instead," said Dumbledore. "The rest will free the soldiers, and destroy the fortress. You and Professor Lupin will handle the shape-shifter."

"If nothing goes wrong," said Professor Bubcek excitedly, "we shall undo, in one night, what it has taken Deorg years to build up."

"If nothing goes wrong," said Lupin.

Harry remembered something.

"What about Atlasov? Won't he betray us?"

Dumbledore looked at Lupin.

"Professor Atlasov has - er - temporarily lost his mind, thanks to Professor Lupin here," he informed Harry. "I sincerely doubt he will regain it until tonight, by which time, hopefully everything will be over. We have also taken care of that unfortunate lady you hid under your bed. And yes, Oleg," he said to Bubcek, "I would like to conduct a scan on all your staff...it would be better to weed out all the spies in the castle, sooner rather than later."

They went on to discuss their strategy. Harry, feeling suddenly very tired, ate some breakfast and then went to bed.

CHAPTER THREE

Harry woke up late in the afternoon to the loud, tuneless singing of the wooden doll. It sounded like some Russian folksong. She stopped when she saw he was awake.

"You left me alone yesterday," she said huffily.

"I had to go somewhere," said Harry, but she had now turned her back on him and was ignoring him. She stood staring out of the window, a sulky look on her face.

Harry noticed that someone had placed an early dinner - or perhaps it was a late lunch - on a tray in the room. He started eating, and the doll, tired of sulking, started her loud, tuneless singing again.

Harry finished eating, then to get away from the doll's singing, wandered out to look for the others. Lupin seemed to be catching up with some of his old associates, while Dumbledore and Oleg Bubcek were having a drink in the parlour, talking. Bubcek was puffing on an enormous pipe.

"Ah, Harry," said Bubcek, when he appeared. "Did you have a good rest?"

"Yes, thank you," said Harry.

"Ready for this evening, Harry?" asked Dumbledore, looking at him through his half-moon spectacles.

"I guess so," said Harry, "although - I don't know exactly what I'm supposed to do."

Dumbledore smiled. "You'll know when the time comes."

Harry was silent a moment, then looked at Dumbledore.

"I forgot to tell you this," he said. "I don't know if it's important, but - the shape-shifter - well, she looks like she's Chinese."

"Is she?" said Dumbledore thoughtfully. "That's interesting."

Professor Bubcek was still puffing on his pipe.

"It doesn't mean she's not Russian, Harry," he said. "Russia has a border with China. Many of those living on the Russian side of the border are of Chinese origin."

"She doesn't speak like a Russian," said Harry.

"She might well be Japanese, too," observed Dumbledore. "I don't know if you are aware of it, Harry, but Kamchatka is fairly near to Japan."

"Oh," said Harry, feeling rather ignorant. He was silent a while, then remembered something else.

"Professor Dumbledore?" he said. "I was just wondering...Is there a special reason why you chose Professor Lupin to handle the shape-shifter?"

Dumbledore's eyes twinkled.

"Well, Harry," he said, "I think that among us, Remus is the most suitable person to tackle her."

Harry was puzzled. "But why?"

"My guess would be," said Bubcek, coughing a bit through a cloud of smoke, "that it's because Remus is a - is a - "

Dumbledore's beard quivered slightly. "Werewolf, Oleg. Werewolf."

"Yes, yes, werewolf," said Bubcek, looking nervously around, as if he were afraid Lupin might be eavesdropping on him. "So - er - having the ability to transform himself, he might have some intrinsic rapport with this shape-shifter, er, perhaps find it easier to communicate with her."

"Precisely, Oleg," said Dumbledore, his eyes still twinkling.

Harry, however, somehow felt that this wasn't the real reason for Dumbledore's choice.

The journey to Milkovo was similar to the previous night's, except that two turnip trucks were used to accommodate the twenty or so extra wizards who were setting out. Harry sat next to Professor Lupin this time, feeling slightly apprehensive. What if something went wrong?

Lupin, however, appeared quite calm.

"Just stay some distance from me till I calm her down a bit," he said to Harry. "When she transforms back to human form, you can come over and join me. And stay away from the fighting." He meant Dumbledore and the others attacking Deorg.

"All right," said Harry, feeling a bit down because his role wasn't very important. However, at least he wasn't being left behind.

They had tried evacuating the village, but the villagers had refused to leave. Most of its inhabitants, although aware of the carnage in the other villages, were just as frightened of the wild beasts in the forest. The most Dumbledore and the other wizards could do was put the strongest protective spells on the houses as they could.

"Well, that's done," said Lupin, when the last house had been charmed. "Hopefully the charm won't be tested...we should be waylaying them before they actually reach the village."

They took up positions outside the village. The road leading to the village went over a hill. Dumbledore and the other wizards were hiding near the crest of the hill, while Harry and Lupin were at its base, some distance from the road. Harry looked up at the sky, where a half moon was shining. He glanced at Lupin, and saw that he was looking at it too.

Lupin gave him a wry smile.

"I'm safe for tonight, at least," he said.

Harry couldn't think what to say, so he merely nodded.

The wait seemed to last forever. Harry found his thoughts wandering back to the previous night's happenings. He could see the girl's eyes, looking at him, dark and watchful, in the dim light of the cave. With her quiet manner, it was difficult to imagine that she and the beast were actually one and the same.

It was getting colder and colder; Harry found himself shivering a bit.

At last, a distant howling was heard.

"It's time," said Lupin quietly, getting up. "Wait here. When you see her transform back, come on over."

"OK," said Harry. He watched Lupin sprinting over to the side of the road, and take up position in a small grove of trees, wand ready in his hand. The howling was louder now. There it was - the beast was coming over the crest of the hill.

Harry watched tensely. Surely, nothing could go wrong.

The beast was nearer - any moment now -

A burst of sparks distracted his attention from the beast. Lupin was on the ground, his wand flying high in an arc away from him. A figure from a nearby tree was dropping like a stone onto him.

"No!" whispered Harry in horror. Forgetting everything, he started running forward.

He could see flashes of light as the two fought under the trees. Then - a huge burst of light in the distance to his left suddenly threw him sideways to the ground.

The beast shrieked madly. Harry started up. A blaze of light was concentrated on the cowed figure behind it. Dumbledore and the other wizards had attacked Deorg.

The chain binding the beast snapped. Snarling and shrieking madly, the animal bounded down the hill toward the village.

Frantically, Harry looked in Lupin's direction. Clouds were scudding across the moon; he could only make out two figures, one slumped on the ground, the other standing frozen as the beast raced toward him.

Harry started running toward them. The moon went completely behind the clouds for a moment. Harry ran blindly on. He was almost there...

Abruptly, the clouds cleared and moonlight shone down on the scene before him. For a split second, he had a glimpse of Lupin and the beast, standing stock still facing each other. The beast uttered a shrill scream. And suddenly, it was gone; only the girl was there, still on all fours, staring up at Lupin, a look of shock on her face.

Harry dashed up, panting and clutching his wand. Lupin had a slightly baffled look on his face. He glanced briefly at Harry, then turned back to the girl.

"Are you all right?" he asked her.

She was still staring, as if in shock. Then, after a few seconds, she nodded mutely.

Harry looked over at the figure of the other wizard on the ground.

"Who's that?"

Lupin glanced at the figure.

"Atlasov," he said.

"Is he - " said Harry.

"Dead," said Lupin, shortly.

He turned to Harry.

"Wait here with her," he said quietly. "I have to bury him. Wizard's honour. There are certain rites that should be performed."

"OK," said Harry, still panting and trying to catch his breath.

Lupin retrieved his wand, then came back and looked at the girl. Dressed only in rags, she was shivering. Drawing a cloak out of the air with his wand, Lupin gave it to Harry and said, "Give this to her before she freezes. And don't let her go anywhere near the fighting." He then strode over to where Atlasov's body was lying.

Harry went over to the girl. She was watching Lupin, but looked at Harry when he came over.

"Are you all right?" he asked, giving her the cloak and sitting down beside her.

"Yes," she said in a rather muffled voice, wrapping herself in the cloak. "Thank you," she added. She glanced in the direction of the fighting. Bursts of light and explosions were still issuing from that area.

"What's happening?" she asked faintly.

"We've attacked Deorg," said Harry. He looked at her. "You're free."

"Free?" she repeated numbly.

She seemed to be in shock. They sat in silence for a while. Harry watched Lupin excavating a hole in the ground; the earth was flying out of the ground into a heap at the command of his wand.

The girl was still shivering slightly. She had seemed more confident in the confines of the cave. Out here, under the open sky, she suddenly looked vulnerable.

She spoke suddenly, and Harry jumped.

"If you don't mind," she said, not looking at him, "I think I'd like to be alone for a while"

"All right," said Harry uneasily, feeling rather unwanted. He got up and walked over to Lupin, who had just placed the body in the grave.

"She says she wants to be alone," he said, when Lupin looked at him.

Lupin looked over at the girl. She was sitting still as a statue, staring into space.

"Let her be," he said. "Deorg's hold on her mind must have been wrenched free suddenly. She'll probably take a while to recover from the shock."

Harry watched the earth flying back into the grave at the command of his wand.

"Have you, um, done this before?" he asked Lupin.

"A few times," said Lupin, casually. He seemed to be searching for something on the ground.

Harry watched him for a few moments.

"Professor Lupin?" he said suddenly. "I was just wondering...The girl - what did you do - how did you get her to transform back?"

Lupin straightened up, frowning.

"A good question," he said, glancing back in the direction of the girl. "If I'd had my wand, I would have used a calming charm; that was what I'd initially planned."

"What?" said Harry, startled.

"I didn't do anything," said Lupin, looking around at the ground again. "She came bounding up so fast, there was no time to react."

"You mean..." said Harry, slowly.

"I thought it was the end, for me," said Lupin matter-of-factly. "But she just stopped short, and transformed back on her own."

He bent over and scooped up a handful of small, round pebbles. Walking over to the grave, he scattered the pebbles over it, muttering some words under his breath.

Harry was silent, thinking about what he'd just heard.

"There, that's done," said Lupin, when he had finished. "Now we can go back - " he glanced in the girl's direction as he spoke, and stopped short.

Harry looked back. The girl had disappeared.

"I didn't watch her!" he said angrily in self-disgust, as they ran to look for her.
"Stupid...idiotic..."

The battle was still raging on. Harry looked at Lupin.

"Do you think..."

"No," said Lupin slowly, "not there...somehow I don't think..."

He turned away from the fighting, looking down the road.

"The village!"

She was standing near the entrance, looking into the village. A crowd of villagers, some carrying burning torches, had gathered outside their houses, attracted by the fighting raging in the distance; but they were now looking curiously at the girl. Harry noticed that many of them were carrying roughly made weapons.

The girl turned to them as they ran up to her. Her dirty face, bathed in the glow of the torches, appeared calm and resolute. Before they could say anything, she spoke first.

"Don't come near," she said.

A murmur ran through the villagers. They were coming closer. Harry suddenly felt very nervous.

"What are you - " began Lupin, but she cut him short.

"They're coming for me," she said quietly, glancing at the crowd. There was a peculiar expression in her eyes. She turned again to Lupin and Harry.

"My time has come," she said to them in a resolute voice. "I have to pay for what I've done. I have blood on my hands. Their blood." She held up her hands, and Harry's heart skipped a beat. They were covered with bright red blood.

She bowed her head slightly, staring at the ground unseeingly. "I don't know how many I've killed," she said softly, as if to herself. "Menfolk...women... children... I can see them before my eyes. I saw their faces, heard their screams, when they died." She gave a quick shudder.

Harry was listening, open-mouthed. He felt as if everything was slightly unreal...the flickering glow of the torches, the soft voice of the girl...

"My time has come," she repeated softly, raising her head and facing the villagers again. "It's their turn, now."

As if on cue, the crowd started coming forward. Harry could hear angry muttering. There were a few shouts in Russian.

Lupin glanced at the girl's face, then at the approaching crowd, and said in a hard, sharp voice, "Harry, take my hand!" Harry grabbed his hand. Lupin reached out with his other and caught hold of the girl's arm, just as the first flurry of torches came raining out at them.

There was a whirl of light, and then they were standing in a forest clearing. A river glinted in the distance. It was strangely quiet; leaves were rustling quietly in the wind. The bursts of light and explosions were gone, as was the village.

The girl had a startled expression on her face. Glancing at her hands, Harry saw that the bloodstains were ebbing away.

She looked at Lupin.

"Why did you do that?" she said to him. "Are you going to kill me instead?"

To Harry's surprise, Lupin smiled.

"No one's going to hurt you tonight," he told her kindly. He looked thoughtfully around the clearing. "We'll make camp here tonight," he said decisively, "maybe have something to eat..." He looked at the girl again, noticing her matted hair and the grime on her, "...and we could all do with a bath, as well."

She flushed slightly and seemed ashamed, but Lupin didn't appear to notice. Taking out his wand, he said, "Let me see, a towel..." - one flick, and a towel appeared in his hand. "Soap, too..." Another flick, and a bar of soap appeared on top of the towel. He looked at her appraisingly. "And yes, some clothes..."

She looked quickly at him. "I - I can take care of the clothes, sir, really," she stammered, the colour rising in her face. She took the towel and soap. "Thank you," she added, uneasily, and then turned and slowly made her way toward the river.

Harry watched her retreating figure.

"What if she goes off again?" he asked.

Lupin was looking around the clearing again, but glanced in the direction of the river as Harry spoke.

"Oh, I don't think she will," he said lightly, his attention returning to the clearing. "We need to make a fire," he said. "Here, I think." He waved his wand, and flames leapt up merrily.

Harry stared at Lupin.

"But - why don't we just bring her back to the castle?"

Lupin was looking around the fire. "Bedding," he said, flicking his wand. Three sleeping bags appeared. He looked at Harry.

"The castle isn't safe for her, Harry," he said. "You heard what some of the wizards there think of her."

"But then," said Harry, "what's going to happen to her?"

"I can only think of one thing," said Lupin, nudging the sleeping bags into more suitable positions around the fire. "We're going to have to bring her back to Hogwarts with us."

"What?" said Harry, surprised. "To Hogwarts? But - will she come?"

"I don't know," replied Lupin. "But what choice is there? She can't stay at the Institute; Dorek and the other wizards there will kill her, sooner or later. No village here would take her in, either - you saw how the villagers acted just now. There isn't any place here, in Kamchatka, or for that matter, anywhere in Russia, that's safe for her."

Harry was silent, pondering this.

"It's only a temporary measure, putting her up at Hogwarts," added Lupin, conjuring up plates and cutlery. "Professor Dumbledore will likely think of something for her."

Lupin stoked the fire up a bit, then said, "Now for the food. Lend me a hand, Harry, instead of just standing there. You can at least make us a cup of tea."

They had just finished preparing the food when there was a burst of light, and Professor Dumbledore appeared. Seeing only Harry and Lupin, he glanced around the clearing, slightly anxious.

"Is everything all right, Remus?" he asked, "The shape-shifter - the girl - "

"Bathing in the river," said Harry, quickly.

Dumbledore smiled in relief.

"That's good, very good," he said. "I was afraid Deorg might have spirited her off when he escaped - "

"He got away?" said Lupin quickly.

Dumbledore looked sober.

"I'm afraid so. But his power is greatly reduced, his fortress destroyed, and his soldiers are probably now on their way home."

His eyes moved to look behind them as he spoke, and turning, they saw that the girl had come back.

Harry could hardly recognise her. Now that she was clean, she looked completely different. She had managed to comb her hair, and it fell, long and black, almost to her waist. She was wearing a green tunic together with close-fitting brown pants and boots. Harry wondered how she had managed to conjure them without a wand.

She stopped when she saw Dumbledore, her eyes wary, the usual rather sullen expression on her face. She reminded Harry of some wild creature, tense and ready to take flight.

Dumbledore smiled kindly, and went forward.

"My dear, it's a real pleasure to meet you at last," he said, taking her hands in his, and peering at her through his half-moon spectacles. "Allow me to introduce myself: Albus Dumbledore, headmaster of Hogwarts School of Wizardry."

She looked rather startled.

"I - I've heard of you, sir," she said, finding her voice, "- and of Hogwarts. It's a famous school."

Dumbledore beamed at her.

"Excellent, my dear," he said, patting her hand. Then, bringing her forward to the others, he said, "and of course, you've met Harry already, and Professor Lupin - have you introduced yourself, Remus?" - Lupin, who was watching with a smile, shook his head - "This is Professor Remus Lupin, one of our teachers at Hogwarts."

She turned to look at Lupin, and for the first time that Harry could remember, she smiled.

Harry was startled. The difference was amazing; the smile seemed to transform her entire face.

Dumbledore thought so, too.

"Lovely, my dear, you have a lovely smile," he said, patting her hand again. "And now, tell us your name."

Her smile vanished. She looked blank.

"My name?" she repeated. She looked at Dumbledore, then at Harry, and lastly Lupin.

Lupin nodded encouragingly at her. She looked confused a moment, and stammered, "It's been a long time -"

She looked at the ground, as if trying to remember, then seemed to pull herself together. Looking at Dumbledore, she drew a breath and said, "It's Jeanne, sir. My name is Jeanne."

Dumbledore beamed at her again.

"And a lovely name, too," he said. "And now, we have to decide, Jeanne, what are we going to do with you?"

She looked at him, then lowered her eyes, remaining silent.

Dumbledore looked at her, and said, "I have a proposal to make to you."

She looked up. "A proposal?"

"Yes, indeed," said Dumbledore. "I would like to extend an invitation to you, Jeanne, to come back with the three of us, to Britain, and stay at Hogwarts."

She looked surprised.

"To Hogwarts?" she faltered. "But - what could I do there? I can't teach - or anything -"

"There's one position vacant," continued Dumbledore, "which might well suit you - that of assistant to Rubeus Hagrid, our gamekeeper."

Harry gave an exclamation of delight. "It's perfect! That would be a brilliant idea, sir!"

"Thank you, Harry," said Dumbledore. He looked back at Jeanne, who was still looking doubtful.

"It has been a long day," he said gently, "and we're all tired. I suggest you have something to eat, and a good night's sleep, and think about my offer. I'll be back first thing in the morning to hear your decision."

He released her hand, and turned to Lupin and Harry. "I have some final things to arrange with Oleg tonight, including deciding how to keep tabs on Deorg, so I'll leave you here for now. Remus, you don't have anything to settle at the Institute, do you?"

"No, Headmaster," replied Lupin.

"I'm off, then," said Dumbledore, and with another smile at Jeanne, he was gone.

Harry woke up in the middle of the night, and saw stars trembling in the sky above him. For a moment, he couldn't recall where he was.

Then he remembered. Turning, he saw Jeanne, in her sleeping bag, across the campfire.

She was awake. She was staring up at the sky, her expression less sullen than usual. She seemed to be thinking about something.

Harry turned the other way, and tried to sleep. But after a few minutes, he turned and looked at Jeanne again.

She was sitting up now, looking around at the forest. A gentle breeze blew, stirring her long hair.

All at once, she rose, and in one swift fluid movement, raised her arms. She seemed to shrink; her hair was disappearing...feathers were sprouting...a barn owl stood in her place.

In a flash, the owl spread its wings, and was gone.

Harry sat up in dismay, and turned to look behind him.

"Professor Lupin! Jeanne - she's gone! - " he began, but stopped short when he saw that Lupin was already awake and sitting up.

Lupin shook his head at Harry, and looked thoughtfully at Jeanne's empty sleeping bag. "Not to worry, Harry, I'm sure she'll come back."

"How do you know?" asked Harry, astonished.

Lupin was still looking at the sleeping bag, but Harry had the feeling he wasn't really seeing it.

"She hasn't realised that she's free, yet..." he said thoughtfully, as if to himself. "It all happened too fast..."

Lupin looked at Harry and smiled.

"She'll be back, Harry, don't worry," he repeated. "Go back to sleep."

Harry lay down, but couldn't sleep. Sure enough, five minutes later, the owl came hurtling back out of the sky, landing on the vacated sleeping bag. It swelled, changed

shape, and then Jeanne was there again. She was shaking slightly, and seemed to be in some distress. Nervously, she glanced around.

Harry quickly shut his eyes, hoping she hadn't seen him watching her. When, after a while, there was no sound from her, he cautiously opened his eyes and peeked at her.

She was standing with her back to him, bending slightly and looking at something in her hands. Then, all at once, she straightened up, and without a backward glance, walked away into the forest. Something in her hand gleamed in the firelight before she disappeared among the trees.

Harry sat up again.

"Professor Lupin!" - but Lupin's sleeping bag was empty.

Harry frantically got up and pulled on his shoes. Feeling among his robes for his wand, he went dashing after Jeanne.

At first he thought he'd gone in the wrong direction, but then a movement caught his eye and he saw her. She was in a small clearing, created by a fallen tree which lay decaying on the ground. Moonlight dimly illuminated the area; Harry could see her clearly enough, including the long knife in her hands.

Harry's stomach lurched when he saw the knife. Where on earth was Lupin?

Jeanne seemed to hesitate a moment, then raised the knife, ready to plunge it into her chest. Harry clenched his hand on his wand. Now! He had to disarm her now! -

"Put the knife down."

Harry jumped. The voice had come somewhere from his right.

Jeanne whirled around, knife still raised in one hand.

Lupin stepped out into the clearing from behind a tree, his eyes never leaving her face.

"Put the knife down," he repeated.

She hesitated. Harry held his breath. The seconds ticked by. She was staring at Lupin, her eyes wide. Then, very slowly, she lowered the knife.

Lupin was walking toward her. He stopped in front of her, extending a hand.

"Give it to me, Jeanne," he said quietly.

She stood frozen, looking at him.

"Give the knife to me."

She looked at the knife, then at Lupin again. Harry was still holding his breath.

After what seemed a long time, she slowly reached her hand out, and gave the knife to Lupin.

Lupin took his wand out, gave the knife a tap, and it disappeared.

Jeanne had turned away. She was shaking slightly, one hand over her mouth. Lupin went up to her, looking concerned.

"Are you all right...?" he began.

She shook her head slightly, then started sobbing. Lupin gave a small exclamation, and then, with a curious expression on his face, gently took her into his arms.

She cried harder than ever. Harry stood where he was, unable to move. He couldn't seem to tear his eyes away from the scene before him.

Lupin let her cry a while. Then, when her sobbing had subsided somewhat, he looked over to where Harry was standing and said calmly, "Go back and get some sleep, Harry. I'll look after her."

Harry went.

CHAPTER FOUR

When Harry woke up the next morning, he found both Lupin and Jeanne already up. Lupin looked his usual cheerful self, and smiled at Harry when he saw him. Jeanne looked subdued. She gave Harry a very small smile when he sat down next to her.

"Are you all right?" he asked. She looked as if she hadn't slept at all.

She shrugged, then nodded.

"Have some breakfast," said Lupin, passing him a plate.

"Thanks," said Harry.

They ate in silence. Jeanne ate self-consciously, fumbling with her knife and fork; she obviously hadn't used cutlery for a long time.

Dumbledore appeared just as they were finishing, together with Professor Bubcek.

"Here we are," he said briskly, smiling. "Jeanne, allow me to introduce Professor Oleg Bubcek. Oleg, this is Jeanne."

Bubcek, beaming, shook her hand. Harry winced, wondering if he'd used his iron grip on her; but she didn't seem to notice.

"Everything all right, Remus?" asked Dumbledore, glancing at Lupin.

Jeanne looked quickly at Lupin.

"More or less, Headmaster," replied Lupin, quietly.

"Very good," said Dumbledore. "And so, Jeanne," he said, taking her hand again, "have you thought about my proposal?"

"Yes," she said in a small voice. She looked rather nervous, because everyone's eyes were on her. "I've decided - I'll come to Hogwarts, if you'll still have me, that is."

"Yes!" said Harry. Lupin smiled at her, and Dumbledore was beaming like the sun.

"Excellent," he said. "We should make a move directly. Oleg," turning to Bubcek, "I'll be in touch."

"Of course, Albus," said Bubcek, shaking Dumbledore's hand vigorously. "I'm deeply indebted to you - we all are -"

"Not at all," said Dumbledore. Bubcek turned and shook hands with Lupin, and then Jeanne.

"Come back again, soon, Remus; there's always a place for you at the Institute. And the best of luck to you, miss." Then he turned to Harry.

Harry held out the amulet.

"Thank you for this, Professor."

"Ah, yes! I had almost forgotten," said Bubcek, with a rather guilty look at Lupin. "Useful little thing, isn't it?" He tucked the amulet away in his robes, then extended his hand.

Harry steeled himself.

"Come back again, soon, Harry," said Bubcek, crushing Harry's hand in his. "When you graduate from Hogwarts, you're always welcome at the Institute. Just send me an owl, anytime."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir," said Harry, retrieving his bruised hand hastily.

"We must be off, then," said Dumbledore.

Harry could see Professor Bubcek still waving as they disappeared in a whirl of light.

They were all back in Lupin's office. Harry could hardly believe the entire adventure had actually taken place - Dumbledore had somehow timed their journey so that they arrived back just after Harry had been swept into the vortex that had brought him to Kamchatka. It was as if they had never left.

Dumbledore came over to Jeanne and looked at her tired face.

"Jeanne, I know you are tired," he said quietly, "but it would be best if we were to have a meeting immediately, and explain everything to the other staff."

She looked at him, then nodded in agreement.

He looked at Lupin. "Remus, if you would help me gather the staff together..."

"Certainly, Headmaster." Lupin gave Harry and Jeanne a quick nod, and then vanished out the door.

Dumbledore turned to Harry.

"Harry, I would like you to attend the meeting as well. If you could bring Jeanne to the staff room..."

"Yes, sir," said Harry, looking at Jeanne. "Come on," he said, leading her through the door.

Jeanne seemed very tense as she followed Harry to the staff room. She stiffened every time they passed anyone along the way. At one point a group of ghosts came down the corridor, and she gasped when one of them passed through her.

She tried to smile when she saw Harry looking at her in concern, and apologised.

"I'm sorry I'm so uptight. It's just difficult...after so long in the cave...to come back to the normal world. I - I'm just not used to people any more..." She looked self-conscious as a group of prefects passed by, looking curiously at her. "Crowds of people tend to make me tense up," she added.

Harry tried to think of something comforting to say.

"There won't be that many people at the meeting, you know," he said. "Probably less than twenty." He saw from her face that to her, twenty was quite enough to constitute a crowd, and realised he had said the wrong thing.

"Most of the teachers are quite kind," he added hurriedly, but then thought of Snape. Snape was sure to be his usual nasty self, he thought. Aloud, he said, "Anyway, you're not alone...Professors Dumbledore and Lupin will be there, and me as well."

Jeanne nodded, but didn't look as if she felt any better.

They had reached the staff room. Harry knocked and entered. There was only one teacher inside; to Harry's dismay, it was Professor Snape.

Snape's eyes narrowed when he saw Harry, and then turned to stare at Jeanne.

"What do you want, Potter?" he asked coldly. "And who is this with you? I don't believe I have seen you before." He stared at Jeanne, frowning. She did not reply, but stared at the floor, wearing her usual sullen expression.

Harry said, "Professor Dumbledore's calling a staff meeting in this room. He said we were to attend," - indicating himself and Jeanne.

Snape looked as if he didn't believe Harry.

"I know of no such meeting," he said, and stared coldly at Jeanne again. "Who is she?"

"Professor Dumbledore will explain," said Harry shortly, trying not to be too rude. He didn't want to give Snape an excuse to remove more points from Gryffindor.

Snape continued to stare at Jeanne. She was staring at the floor, but all of a sudden, she lifted her head and stared coldly back at him.

Snape blinked. Harry held his breath. Jeanne continued to glare at Snape.

After what seemed like forever to Harry, Snape gave a small, cold smile and said smoothly, "Do I get the impression that something is wrong?"

Jeanne didn't even blink.

"Indeed there is," she said acidly, returning his stare. "I believe you are staring at me."

Snape opened his mouth to speak, but the staff room door suddenly opened and Professors Sprout, McGonagall and Flitwick came in. Harry drew a sigh of relief.

"Come on, Jeanne," he said, taking her arm and propelling her to the long table at the end of the room. The other teachers followed, looking at her curiously.

To Harry's annoyance, Snape took a seat right opposite Jeanne. She was wearing her sullen expression again. To Harry's relief, she was now ignoring Snape, and sat with her hands folded in her lap, staring at the floor.

The other teachers gradually filed in, including Professor Dumbledore. Looking around, he smiled at Jeanne and Harry, then asked, "where is Professor Lupin?"

"He said he was going to get Hagrid, Albus," said tiny Professor Flitwick.

"Ah, of course," said Dumbledore, looking at Jeanne. "We must definitely make Hagrid known to you, my dear."

"Albus, I don't suppose you would care to explain what this is all about?" inquired Professor McGonagall.

"In a while, Minerva," said Dumbledore, as Lupin came in with Hagrid, who beamed when he saw Harry, and then looked curiously at Jeanne.

"Apologies for the delay," said Lupin cheerfully, taking the seat next to Jeanne, so that she was sitting between him and Harry. Snape scowled.

"Not at all, Remus," replied Dumbledore. Then, looking around, he began to relate all the events that had taken place in Kamchatka. When it came to the part where they reached Deorg's fortress, he nodded at Harry.

Feeling slightly embarrassed, Harry related how he had first met Jeanne. However, he made no mention of the mirror in the cave, or its gift. The expressions on the faces of the other teachers grew more and more amazed as he went on, and most were staring at Jeanne, who was still sitting sullenly and staring downwards.

When the tale was done, there was a silence. Hagrid's small eyes were wide, and he kept staring at Jeanne in fascination.

Then Snape spoke.

"An amazing tale, Headmaster," he said, his voice smooth and cold. "But much remains untold. What of this shape-shifter? We know nothing of her background. We do not even know her full name. True, she may have suffered much at the hands of Lord Deorg, but how do we know his Dark Arts have not rubbed off on her? Has she made known where her loyalties lie?"

Lupin looked as if he were about to say something, but to Harry's surprise, Jeanne spoke first.

"That is a fair question," she said quietly, looking at Snape. "If I am to become a member of this school, I believe I should make my story known. And you may feel free to question me."

She paused, looking rather nervous. She gave Lupin a quick glance, and he nodded encouragingly at her.

"First of all," she said, "my full name is Jeanne Graham."

There was a murmur of surprise. Jeanne, anticipating this, smiled slightly.

"Yes," she said, "I know I am Chinese - but let me explain: I was adopted as a child, by an English wizard and his wife, Charles and Maria Graham."

She paused, then continued.

"During my first few years with them, we lived in England. Then, when I was ten, we suddenly moved - fled, rather - to a small town near the Russian border with China.

"My foster parents never told me the reason we moved, but I believe now that they were fleeing from Lord Deorg. The town we lived in was so remote that there was no wizarding school nearby, so everything I learned about the magical arts was from my foster parents.

"We stayed there for seven years, then suddenly, we moved again. We began leading a nomadic existence, moving from town to town, changing our name in each one. I knew we were running from someone, but my parents refused to tell me who it was. I only knew that they were afraid - desperately afraid."

Her voice shook slightly. She steadied it, then continued.

"We moved from place to place for four years. We stayed near the Russia-China border all that time. It was better, you see - my foster mother was Russian, and my foster father spoke the language well enough to pass off as one too. And no one would be suspicious about me, because there was a large community of Chinese origin in the area, and it was not strange that a childless Russian couple adopt a Chinese child.

"However, there came a time when my father decided to move further away. It proved to be his undoing. We had not left the border region for two months when Deorg caught up with us."

She looked rather pale.

"He came upon us one night. I woke up on hearing my parents' screams. Before I could get up, he came to my room, and possessed me."

She paused, and glanced at Dumbledore.

"You know the rest. I was trapped in Deorg's fortress for the next few years, until...until the three of you came." She looked from Dumbledore to Lupin, then at Harry. Her eyes were suddenly very bright.

"I never thanked you for that," she said softly, looking at them. Her voice was shaking slightly again.

"There's no need," said Lupin soberly. Harry nodded in agreement. Dumbledore inclined his head toward her, his eyes kind.

There was a silence. Snape was still wearing his usual sardonic expression, but most of the staff were looking sympathetic. Harry saw two fat tears trickling down Hagrid's beard.

Dumbledore looked around.

"Are there any questions for Miss Graham?" he inquired.

For a moment, no one said anything. Harry looked at Snape. He was looking at Jeanne with narrowed eyes, but before he could say anything, Professor McGonagall spoke.

"Did you never know who your true parents were?"

"No," replied Jeanne. "My foster parents never told me. I don't even know my real surname."

She hesitated, then said, "I do know, from snatches of conversation I happened to overhear, that my foster parents must have persuaded my true parents to let them adopt me, because I was a shape-shifter. My foster father was aware that Deorg was looking for someone like me. It was his life's mission, I believe, to keep me away from Deorg."

She looked down, and murmured, half to herself, "but in the end - it was all in vain..."

There was a pause. Then, Dumbledore spoke.

"I met your foster father only once, long ago, Jeanne. A very reserved person, but regarded as an excellent teacher by all who knew him. He was a well-respected wizard, dedicating his life to fighting the agents of the Dark. You might think his a failed mission because he perished in the attempt and could not prevent Deorg from capturing you, but I think he won through in the end."

She looked at him.

"He taught you to choose between good and evil, instilled the right values in you," said Dumbledore. "How else could you have withstood Deorg's onslaught during those years? Deorg had difficulty even possessing you."

She flushed slightly. "Not difficult enough," she said slowly.

"A weaker soul would have broken, or been corrupted," said Dumbledore. "If Charles were here today, he would have been proud of you."

She sat very still, her face pale. Harry had the impression she was trying very hard not to cry. A tear rolled down one of her cheeks, and she swiftly brushed it away.

There was an awkward silence, and then Hagrid cleared his throat and spoke.

"I ain't got no quest'ns ter ask, miss, but I sure would like ter see yeh transform into somethin'. I'm awful fond of animals, an' it would be a real treat fer all of us."

"An excellent idea," said Snape coolly, looking at Jeanne. "A good test of whether any of Lord Deorg's dark magic has instilled itself in her."

Jeanne looked rather surprised, and glanced at Dumbledore.

"I don't believe there's any harm in that," said Dumbledore, looking at her with a twinkle in his eye. "Why don't you show Professor Snape here what you can do."

She thought for a moment, as if deciding which animal to transform into, then nodded. Rising from her seat, she walked over to the wall opposite where there was a large and empty space.

She stood, facing them, and raised her arms.

The lights in the room dimmed. Her shape was changing; she was growing taller, taller - almost as high as the ceiling. Scales covered her body, scaly wings were sprouting...

Harry heard Hagrid give an ecstatic cry. Looming high above them, the dragon glowed golden in the darkness of the room. Giving a loud cry, it raised its head and brought it down, a large stream of fire issuing from its mouth at Professor Snape.

Snape ducked his head down - but the fire was only an illusion.

Now the dragon was changing. Its body was narrowing, its scales enlarging and darkening, wings shrinking and disappearing. A huge, hooded serpent had taken its place, forked tongue tasting the air, wicked red eyes glowing eerily in the dark.

Harry shuddered, remembering the basilisk in the chamber of secrets.

The lights in the room gradually came on again. The serpent gave a menacing hiss, then began to shrink. Smaller and smaller it became, the black scales becoming feathers, its mouth narrowing into a sharp beak. An eagle was there, gazing at them with fierce eyes. Spreading its wings, it soared into the air with a piercing cry, swooping low over the table and making some of the teachers duck.

Then the eagle was plummeting down, changing form in the air as it fell. When it hit the ground, it had changed into a large badger.

The badger looked at them for a few seconds, its eyes bright, its expression friendly and inquisitive. Then it began to grow. Larger, larger...its fur changing to the colour of gold, its eyes becoming cat-like, its legs narrowing and lengthening.

The lioness towered over them, almost as tall as the dragon had been. Lifting its head, it let forth a roar so deafening Harry was sure every creature in Hogwarts could hear it.

Then in one fluid motion, the lioness was shrinking...its fur was vanishing...tail growing shorter and shorter...

And then only Jeanne was there, standing quietly in front of them, her face slightly flushed, her eyes bright.

There was a sudden stillness in the room. She stood there, rather nervously, aware that every eye in the room was on her. When she finally spoke, she sounded apologetic.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I know a male lion would have been more appropriate ... but - it was just beyond my capabilities."

As if her voice had broken the spell, there was a swift murmur running around the table. Then Hagrid let out a loud whoop and started clapping loudly, not a few of the other teachers joining in.

"Wond'rful! Wond'rful!" shouted Hagrid happily. "That was some dragon, eh, Harry? It's like I have Norbert back ag'n..."

Professor Flitwick was clapping away excitedly; Lupin caught Jeanne's eye, and nodded and smiled at her, while Dumbledore's eyes were twinkling.

Harry looked at Snape. He was looking at Jeanne, his expression shrewd and calculating.

Jeanne walked back to her seat and sat shakily down. She looked slightly overcome by all the applause. Harry, still clapping, said, "that was our school crest, wasn't it? You ought to repeat it in front of the whole school!"

She looked appalled at the idea.

Presently the noise died down, and Dumbledore, looking at Snape, said, "Have you anything else to ask, Severus?"

Snape looked at Jeanne and his eyes glittered. She looked warily back at him.

"None, Headmaster," Snape said.

"Good," said Dumbledore. "If there are no objections, then, I shall appoint Miss Graham as assistant to Hagrid."

The other teachers nodded; Hagrid looked excited.

Dumbledore stood up, signalling that the meeting was over. Lupin rose too, and beckoned to Hagrid to come over, but Snape was already speaking to Jeanne.

"Miss Graham, I believe you do not know most of us," he said in his smooth, cold voice. "Allow me to introduce myself: Severus Snape, Potions Master of this school. And this is Professor McGonagall..."

He proceeded to introduce the other teachers to Jeanne. Harry watched, open-mouthed. Why was Snape suddenly being so nice to her?

Jeanne mechanically smiled, nodded, and shook hands. When nearly all had been introduced, Lupin came forward with Hagrid.

"And this, Jeanne, is Rubeus Hagrid, our gamekeeper," he said, smiling.

Hagrid came forward, all smiles.

"Lovely ter meet yeh, my dear. That was some lovely show yer put on for us. It'll be a pleasure, ter work with yeh..."

Leaving Hagrid and Jeanne to get acquainted, Lupin turned to Harry.

"Well, that should be it for tonight, Harry," he said, smiling. "You handled yourself very well in our little adventure. And now it's time for you to get back to your common room...Ron and Hermione must be wondering where you are."

"I didn't do anything - " Harry began, but was interrupted by Hagrid, who had come up with Jeanne.

"Time fer Jeanie ter take a rest, she looks really tired," he said to Lupin, one arm around Jeanne's shoulders. "No need ter start talkin' about work yet, we'll have plenty of time tomorrow..."

"What, it's already Jeanie, is it?" said Lupin, laughing, and looking at Jeanne, who was smiling and looking slightly embarrassed. They started discussing where she should put up for the night, and Harry, seeing they had forgotten he was there, decided to make a quiet exit.

CHAPTER FIVE

"Harry, you are pulling our legs, aren't you?"

It was the fifth time Ron had asked that question. Harry gave a small sigh of exasperation. He was beginning to wonder if they would ever believe him.

The Gryffindor common room was empty now; everyone else had gone to bed. Only Harry, Ron and Hermione had stayed behind, it had taken Harry so long to tell his entire story.

Ron looked over to where Hermione was sitting, examining the bottle of stardust which had been the gift of the mirror in the cave.

"I mean, it's just way out..." he continued, "you were only gone for an hour or two. How could all that have happened - ?"

Hermione held the bottle up to the light. The dust inside shimmered like a collection of little stars.

"It's really pretty, Harry," she said, thoughtfully, "but I've seen bottles like this in Zonko's...you know, the powder they throw in the air when - "

"Oh, give it back!" said Harry crossly, taking the bottle away from her. "I simply shouldn't have said anything. Why on earth would I make it all up? You can ask Dumbledore, or Lupin, if you want!"

He got up to go, but as he walked round one of the armchairs, he tripped over something on the floor.

"Ouch!" squeaked the Something.

"Neville!" exclaimed Hermione, as Harry, muttering under his breath, got to his feet. "What are you doing, hiding on the floor down there?"

Neville Longbottom got slowly to his feet, his face very red.

Ron stood up, looking angry.

"You were eavesdropping on us, weren't you? I bet you heard everything Harry said!"

"I didn't mean to," said Neville, trembling slightly. "I was trying to read up on Potions" - he held up a rather tattered and stained textbook - "but I fell asleep. I only woke up when you came to this corner and started talking -"

"Why on earth didn't you get up and leave?" asked Ron, exasperated.

"I - I was half asleep at first - thought I was dreaming," stuttered Neville. "By the time I was fully awake, you were half way through - and I knew you'd be mad at me -"

"We are - " said Hermione.

"So you thought - " said Harry at the same time, "- that you could lie there till we went up to bed, and we'd never have known you were there!"

Neville looked like he might cry.

"I didn't mean to eavesdrop," he blubbered. "I promise I won't tell a soul." He looked at Harry. "Anyway, all the stuff you said - it's not really true, - is it?"

Harry looked at the three of them.

"I've had enough!" he said, completely frustrated by now. "I'm going to bed!"

And he marched off toward the dormitory.

Harry didn't sleep well that night. He pretended he was asleep when Ron came up to bed, but later found himself staring into space, thinking about all that had happened.

It had been morning in Kamchatka when they had left, and he really wasn't sleepy. He got up and took out the bottle of stardust and looked at it, turning it around in his hands. He wondered which room Jeanne was in and what she was doing - probably sound asleep by now, he thought, she'd looked so tired.

He held the bottle up. The dust inside swirled and sparkled, and he had that curious feeling again that it was alive.

"What death has taken, will return to you." Could he ever bring his parents back?

He sighed, and put the bottle back in his trunk.

"It's just wishful thinking," he told himself sternly. "Don't try fooling yourself."

Still, it was some time before he fell asleep.

Harry didn't see Jeanne again until more than two weeks later. She didn't appear at breakfast in the Great Hall the next morning, but he had half expected that because of her fear of crowds. Her absence seemed to set the seal on Ron and Hermione's disbelief in the matter, although they were careful not to mention the subject in front of him.

At the end of the first week of school, they went down to Hagrid's for tea, but there was no sign of her.

"Giv'n her the other side of the grounds ter start with, it's better fer her, what not bein' used ter people an' all," said Hagrid, when Harry asked about her. "It's a shock fer her, no wonder, comin' back ter the real world after what she's bin through, not to mention she's more used ter Russian customs an' their way of livin', than what we have here."

"You mean, it's true?" said Ron, who had been listening, amazed. "Harry wasn't just pulling our leg?"

"'Course it's true!" said Hagrid, turning a fierce eye on him. He looked at Harry. "Yeh mean ter say these two didn' believe yer story, 'til now?"

Harry grinned at Ron and Hermione.

"If his story's all true, it's totally unfair," said Hermione indignantly. "We should have been allowed to go to Kamchatka as well."

"I just can't believe it!" said Ron, looking at Harry. "It's completely unfair, that we got left out."

Harry tried not to look smug.

"Just being in the right place at the right time," he said.

"I'd love to go to Russia," said Hermione dreamily. "Do you know, they have this really incredible tradition - "

"How fantastic, to be able to change into any animal you want," said Ron, not listening to Hermione. "I'd like to see her repeat what she did in the staff room."

"Yeh'll have ter wait," said Hagrid. "She's shy about meetin' the two of yer. Tol' her all about you three, o' course." He was taking out a dish of fudge as he was speaking.

Hermione looked at the fudge, and then nibbled some of it.

"This is good!" she said, looking rather astonished. "Hagrid, your cooking's really improving!"

Hagrid went red.

"Ain't mine, actually," he said, looking slightly guilty. "Jeanie did it. Said it's easier fer her ter do the food, what with her bein' able ter do magic an' all, inst'd of me doin' it the other way."

"You mean, she's cooking for you?" said Harry incredulously. "I didn't think that was part of her job."

Hagrid went even redder.

"Tol' her that, but she said she migh' as well, seein' she's takin' her meals here an' all."

"No wonder we never see her in the Hall," said Harry, trying some of the fudge.

Hermione looked around Hagrid's hut. It looked a great deal tidier than usual.

"She's been cleaning up for you as well, I see," she said. "Is she staying here with you?"

Hagrid blushed red as a beet.

"Course not," he said heatedly. "She's got a room in the castle. Dumbledore wants ter keep an eye on her...if she stay'd out, he's afraid she might go runnin' wild, an' that Deorg fellow could catch her an' we might not know fer weeks."

Ron grinned.

"Cooks for you...cleans for you...at this rate, Hagrid, you might as well marry her," he said. "Besides, you said you always wanted to have your own dragon. If she's a shape-shifter, I bet she could turn into a dragon for you."

Harry could see that Hagrid couldn't take much more of the teasing, so he tried to tactfully change the subject.

"How is she, anyway?" he asked. "Is the work all right for her?"

Hagrid looked enthusiastic.

"Couldn't be better," he said, his eyes crinkling into a smile. "She can talk to any an'mal, an' they can talk back to her. Blimey, wish I could do that." He looked wistful.

Harry was surprised.

"I didn't know she could do that," he said.

"Didn't yer?" said Hagrid. "Makes sense, doesn't it? After all, if she can change into an animal, sure she ought ter know some of their language."

Harry had never thought about that.

"Talk'd ter Fang here, firs' thing when she came here," Hagrid continued.

"Really?" said Harry, interested. "What did Fang tell her?"

Hagrid suddenly looked rather crestfallen.

"Said ter tell me, he didn't like my cookin' very much," he said mournfully.

Harry and the others finally met Jeanne the following week. Hagrid had insisted she stay to tea when they came.

She was looking slightly more relaxed now, and was still clad in forest colours, green and brown. Harry had thought she might have conjured some robes for herself by now, but as Hagrid didn't wear robes, she evidently felt that as his assistant, she should follow suit. She had cut off some of her hair and braided the rest, twisting it up behind her head. They found her preparing tea when they arrived, wearing her usual slightly sullen expression; but she smiled when she saw Harry.

"Hi, Harry," she said.

"This is Ron, and this is Hermione," said Harry, hoping they would get along.

Jeanne seemed relaxed enough; she smiled and shook hands with them, and then Crookshanks, whom Hermione had brought along in anticipation of meeting Jeanne, bounded into her lap.

Jeanne was about to say something, when a small blur of feathers flew into the room and landed on her shoulder.

Ron was round-eyed.

"That's my owl!" he said to Jeanne.

"Yes, I know," she said, laughing. She turned to look at Pigwidgeon, who was hooting away excitedly. "He has been visiting me rather often. He tells me a lot of things."

"What things?" asked Ron, eyes even rounder.

She listened to the owl's hooting a while.

"He says, this morning you got up late for breakfast...and your mother sent you a letter...and some sweets also..." She paused, still listening to the tiny owl, "...and he says will you please not put so much sugar in your cornflakes, he prefers it plain..."

Ron was listening, open-mouthed.

Hermione looked excited.

"What about me?" she squeaked. "Does Crookshanks have anything to say?"

Jeanne looked at Crookshanks, who was still sitting in her lap. Crookshanks lifted his squashed face to look at her.

Jeanne said something in a strange language, but Crookshanks made no sound. Instead, he just stared steadily at Jeanne.

Jeanne stared back silently for a while, then smiled.

"He says you're an excellent mistress, only sometimes you study too hard," she said to Hermione. "And he likes sleeping on your bed with you. He thinks you smell nice."

Hermione blushed and beamed.

"But Crookshanks didn't say anything," Harry objected.

"He said it with his mind," Jeanne explained.

"You can read his mind?" asked Hermione, breathlessly.

"That's how most animals communicate," explained Jeanne. "They each have their own language, but there's also a common language which all of them understand. And they have to do it by telepathy, because their mouths are all shaped differently, and not all of them are capable of producing the right sounds."

Ron looked confused, but Hermione looked fascinated.

"But you understand both," said Harry.

She nodded.

Ron was looking rather jealous.

"He seems to have a lot to say to you," he said to Jeanne, nodding at Pigwidgeon.

"That's because he talks about you all the time," she said. "He's terribly proud that he belongs to you. He says so quite often."

Ron's face brightened when he heard this.

Altogether, Harry felt the tea-party went off quite well.

"I should have brought Hedwig along," he said to Jeanne, when they were leaving. "It would have been interesting to see what she might have to say about me."

Jeanne laughed.

"I've already spoken to her," she said, "and she didn't say a lot."

"Oh," said Harry, feeling rather disappointed.

Jeanne grinned at him.

"She just puffed out her chest, and looked very proud, and said, 'I'm Harry Potter's owl.' And that more or less said everything."

CHAPTER SIX

They were about one month into the school year when Jeanne suddenly started attending Hagrid's Care of Magical Creatures classes.

Ever since the affair with Buckbeak, in Harry's third year, Hagrid had been too afraid to involve any large animals in his classes, devoting most of his time to the more harmless (but boring) flobberworms and salamanders. So the class was astonished when, one day, Hagrid announced that they would be learning about Thylacinchs.

"Bit of a shock ter look at, if yeh haven't seen one before," said Hagrid to the class, before leading them to the enclosure. "Basically has two heads, a horse's head at one end an' a wolf's head at the other."

There were murmurs of surprise when the students heard this. It sounded totally bizarre.

"Thylacinchs are as good as horses, run as fast, an' the wolf at one end makes fer good protection, a lot o' predators think twice about chasin' yeh when there's a wolf starin' at yeh in the face," continued Hagrid. "The wolf part ain't nothin' ter worry about, if yeh know how ter handle Hippogriffs, just bow to them same, that should do the trick." Hagrid was carefully avoiding Draco Malfoy's eye as he said this.

Despite having heard Hagrid's description, most of them had a shock when they actually saw the animals themselves. They were basically horses, each with a wolf's head at the rear end of its body. Neville turned pale when he saw them.

"Look!" said Hermione, "Look who's there, Harry, it's Jeanne!"

Jeanne was quietly standing at one end of the pen. She waved when she saw the three of them.

Neville looked startled when he saw Jeanne.

"You mean, it's true?" he said to Harry. "Is she the one - did she really - "

"She's just like any normal person, Neville," said Ron, impatiently. "I can assure you, she's much more human than Snape, for one thing."

Neville trembled. He was terrified of Professor Snape.

The class gathered near the pen, looking curiously at the Thylacinchs. Hagrid seemed a lot more confident now that Jeanne was there.

"Everyone, this is my new assistant, Jeanne," announced Hagrid. "She'll be helpin' all of yeh if there's any problem."

Jeanne merely nodded vaguely at the class.

It was quite simple, actually. Each student had to make friends with the wolf end of the Thylacinch - by bowing to it - before mounting the animal and riding once around the pen.

"You talked Hagrid into this, didn't you?" said Harry to Jeanne, as he waited for Hermione to finish her turn.

"Sort of," she replied. "I've been watching some of the classes. I told him the students wouldn't have obtained a proper education if they'd learned about nothing more than flobberworms when they graduate from Hogwarts."

"You were watching?" said Harry. "We never saw you."

"I was sitting in that tree," she said, smiling and pointing.

"Anyway," she went on, "Hagrid's been pestering me to interact with more people. He says I can't just keep to myself all the time. So we made a bargain : I'll help him out here, and he shall introduce some more interesting animals."

Hermione came galloping up on her Thylacinch.

"Your turn, Harry."

When Harry had finished riding his Thylacinch, he and Ron and Hermione went over to a quiet spot to wait for the others to finish. To their surprise, they found Neville there, hiding in the bushes.

"What's up, Neville?" asked Hermione in astonishment. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm not going," he whispered, staring in fascinated horror at the Thylacinchs.

"It's really nothing, Neville," said Harry. "You just bow at the wolf-end, and when it nods back, you can mount the horse and ride one round. That's it."

Neville did not seem convinced.

"I've got a phobia about wolves," he said.

They looked at him in surprise.

"I visited my Aunt Nell's during the holidays," said Neville, his voice shaking slightly. "She likes animals as much as Hagrid does. Anyway, this time she had a huge black wolf in her yard. She'd taken it in because it had a wounded paw."

Neville gulped.

"It got out of the pen one day," he continued. "Came snarling after me and jumped right on me." His voice ended in a frightened squeak. "Aunt Nell got it off me, but I keep having nightmares about it - I keep seeing its eyes staring at me..."

"Scared of wolves now, eh, Longbottom?" said a drawling voice from behind them. "Thought you'd have been scared long ago, with a werewolf teaching us and all."

Draco Malfoy had been listening from behind. He was smiling slyly, Crabbe and Goyle flanking him as usual.

"What did you say, Malfoy?" said Harry angrily, coming forward.

"Ooh, angry, aren't we, Potter," drawled Malfoy, "but of course you'd stick up for the werewolf, you're teacher's pet, aren't you, and besides, he's the kind you hang out with, walking around in rags, as poverty-stricken as Weasley here..."

He stopped, as a shadow fell across them. Jeanne had come up quietly, and had overheard.

"What did you say, Mr Malfoy?" she asked, in a dangerously quiet tone.

Malfoy looked at her, his eyes narrowing.

"M-Malfoy, you sh-shut up about Professor Lupin," said Neville suddenly. "He's one of the best teachers in this school."

"Sticking up for the werewolf, Longbottom?" sneered Malfoy. "All because he taught you how to dress a Boggart up in a hat and handbag. You'd think, if he could do that, he might as well spare himself wandering around in those rags of his - "

He stopped, because Jeanne had come right up to him. She said nothing, but reached a hand out and grabbed the front of Malfoy's robes, lifting him into the air.

Crabbe and Goyle came forward, but she made a small motion with the other hand, and they both keeled over and went to sleep.

Malfoy was choking slightly. Jeanne brought her face close to him, and said softly, "Not afraid of werewolves, are you, Mr Malfoy? I'll show you something you might be afraid of."

Malfoy's eyes suddenly widened in horror, as if he could see something the rest couldn't. He turned very white, and then went slightly green, and started trembling.

Jeanne brought her face very close to his.

"Professor Lupin is an old friend of mine, Mr Malfoy," she said, in a quiet, deadly voice. "Don't you ever, ever insult him in front of me...or I will make you very, very sorry, indeed."

Malfoy was sweating now. He nodded his head desperately.

Jeanne removed her hand, and he fell to the ground in a heap. She walked away without a second look at him.

"What's your name - Mr Longbottom? - you haven't had your turn yet," she called to Neville. "Time's almost up."

Neville looked terrified.

"Come on, Neville," said Harry, "Don't be afraid. We'll come with you."

Ron and Hermione had been watching Malfoy, who was still looking slightly green. They turned around when they heard Harry, and ran forward to join him and Neville.

"Wonder what she showed him," muttered Ron to Harry, as Hermione led Neville by the arm to the pen.

Harry looked back. Malfoy seemed to have recovered, and was kicking Crabbe and Goyle awake.

"What did she mean, Lupin is an old friend?" he said, puzzled. "She only met him a month ago."

Neville was the last to go. Hagrid dismissed the other students, and took his own leave, since he had to rush off to see Professor Dumbledore about something.

"All right, Neville, just bow to the wolf," said Jeanne.

Neville stood as if petrified, gazing in horror at the wolf-head, which looked at him and growled.

Jeanne said something to the wolf.

"You musn't be afraid," she said gently to Neville. "He can smell your fear."

"I'm scared of wolves," moaned Neville.

The wolf growled again. Neville uttered a frightened squeak, and turned and ran - straight into another Thylacinch behind him.

The horse-end of the Thylacinch had been grazing, and Neville ran right into the horse's head. It let out a snort, wheeled around, and gently kicked Neville in the stomach.

Neville crumpled up on the ground, his face white. Jeanne gave a cry of dismay, and ran up to him, together with Harry and the others.

Neville was groaning. The others watched fearfully as Jeanne examined him.

"He'll be all right," she said, after a while. "The Thylacinch didn't kick him very hard - it was more like a friendly warning. As a rule, they're fairly gentle animals."

She looked at Neville. "Let's get you to Madam Pomfrey."

Neville didn't stay long with Madam Pomfrey, but he was very subdued for the rest of the day. When Hermione asked him if he was all right, he looked rather distressed.

"I've got to meet Miss Graham later this evening," he said dismally. "She said she'd do a make-up class with me."

Harry listened in surprise.

"Please come with me," Neville begged. "I don't want to be alone with her, and all those wolves."

So, that evening, the four of them trooped downstairs to the castle entrance.

Unfortunately, they met Professor Snape on the way. His eyes narrowed when he saw them, and a sneering smile curled his lips.

"Where do you think you're going?" he said, his eyes glittering. "Students are not supposed to be wandering around at this time."

Neville looked too frightened to speak.

"Please, sir, we have a makeup class for Care of Magical Creatures, with Miss Graham," said Hermione in a rush.

Snape stared disbelievingly at them.

"With Miss Graham?" His lip curled. "I believe it is Rubeus Hagrid who is in charge of Care of Magical Creatures."

"Miss Graham is helping him," said Ron, quickly. "She just started today."

Snape looked at them, as if considering.

"Very well," he snapped. "But if I find out otherwise, it'll be fifty points from Gryffindor for each of you."

He turned, and stalked away.

"Actually, I'm surprised he let us off so easily," said Hermione, as they hurried toward Hagrid's hut.

Harry thought so, too.

"Maybe it's because of Jeanne," he said. "He was almost nice to her, later that night, in the staff room.

"You mean, he has the hots for Jeanne?" said Ron, with a snort of laughter. "That would be the most bizarre thing I ever heard...Snape isn't capable of any human emotion!"

They found Jeanne waiting at the enclosure. She looked surprised to see so many of them.

"We came to give Neville moral support," explained Harry.

"But where are the Thylacincths?" asked Hermione, looking around the empty pen.

"Right here," said Jeanne, smiling, and indicating herself. "I can transform into one, and Neville knows I won't hurt him, don't you, Neville?"

Neville gaped at her, wide-eyed.

"I think we'll start with wolves first, since that's the main problem," Jeanne went on. "Neville, I'm going to change into a very small wolf first. Then, when you're all right with that, we'll slowly work our way up to a bigger one. How about that?"

Neville's eyes were large, but he nodded.

Jeanne raised her arms, and began to shrink. Smaller and smaller...fur was growing on her skin...

A little wolf cub had appeared. It frisked and frolicked around, letting its tongue loll out, and smiling at Neville.

Ron was watching, open-mouthed. Hermione squealed in delight.

"Oh, it's so cute! Oh Neville, you can't be scared...it's so adorable...stroke it, like this - " she demonstrated.

Neville looked petrified for a moment, then, since the wolf cub seemed harmless, cautiously tried to pet it.

The wolf cub got all excited, and licked Neville on the face.

"It's wet!" exclaimed Neville, wiping his face. The others laughed.

The cub growled suddenly. Neville squeaked in fear, and backed away.

The cub frisked about again, running at Neville and nipping at his robes.

"Hey, stop that!" he cried. "Naughty wolf! These robes are new..."

The cub worried the robes, then growled.

"Gran will kill me," moaned Neville, ignoring the growls, and looking at his robes. "You dumb wolf..."

The wolf cub cocked its head to one side and looked at Neville. Then, suddenly, it swelled, and grew slightly larger.

Neville backed away hurriedly.

The now slightly larger wolf cub bounded forward and worried at Neville's robes again, licking his face when he bent down to free himself.

"That's right, Neville, pat it," called Hermione encouragingly.

"He - he's not so bad, - is he?" panted Neville.

The wolf cub stopped its frisking, and looked at Neville.

"Er, - I mean, she," said Neville hurriedly.

The wolf kept growing gradually, frisking about and playing with Neville until he got used to it. Before they knew it, it had become a full-grown she-wolf.

"She's an awfully pretty wolf," remarked Hermione, looking at the silvery-grey fur and neat paws.

"She is, actually," said Neville, as the wolf licked his face. It then growled suddenly.

"Oh, no, you don't," said Neville to the growling wolf, "I'm used to your tricks, by now."

And suddenly, the wolf was gone. Jeanne was there, instead, smiling.

"Very good, Neville," she said, looking pleased. "Very good, indeed. Now, we can start on Thylacinchs."

Neville looked rather apprehensive, but Jeanne said, "It's only me, Neville. I wouldn't hurt you, would I?"

Neville shook his head, looking calmer.

Jeanne raised her arms, and transformed into a Thylacanth. Neville took a step back.

"Look at the wolf's head, Neville, it's the same she-wolf," called Harry.

Indeed it was. The she-wolf's head was looking at Neville, who after a moment's hesitation, approached it slowly. When he was a few feet from it, he suddenly froze.

"Bow to it, Neville!" shouted Ron.

The wolf's tongue lolled out in a smile. Though it didn't seem possible, Harry was sure the wolf had just winked at Neville.

Neville looked at it in amazement. Then, lowering his head, he bowed to the wolf.

The wolf's head nodded back gravely. Then, the horse-end gave a little whinney, and the animal obligingly lowered itself so that Neville could mount it.

"You've done it, Neville!" Harry shouted, as the Thylacanth trotted off, with Neville clinging to its back, a look of disbelief on his face.

They watched as the two galloped around the enclosure. When they returned, Neville's round cheeks were flushed, and there was a broad grin on his face.

Harry, Ron and Hermione applauded as he dismounted. Then, the Thylacanth was gone, and only Jeanne was there.

"That was great!" cried Neville, panting. "I did it! I really did it!"

Jeanne was smiling and looking pleased.

"Yes, you did, Neville," she said warmly. "You did very well, indeed."

"Let's try again, with a fiercer wolf this time!" Neville cried enthusiastically.

She smiled, but shook her head.

"That's enough for today," she replied. "I don't want you to be too familiar with wolves; they are, after all, still dangerous creatures. If you were to meet one outside, you'd better remember that you should run for it."

Neville was still grinning away, as they walked back to the castle.

Harry couldn't sleep. He sat up in bed, and after a while got out and walked over to the water jug to get a drink, then stood at the window, looking out. It was a beautiful night; the moonlight came streaming in the open window, casting sharp, black shadows about the room.

A movement in the distance caught Harry's eye. There, down by the lake, he could vaguely see two figures.

The figures disappeared behind some trees, then reappeared. Harry strained his eyes. They were some kind of animal, running in unison along the lakeside. They stopped at one point, and raised their heads, as if looking at the moon, then turned and trotted into the forest nearby.

"They look like dogs," thought Harry. Could one of them be Fang? Perhaps Hagrid had obtained a new dog.

He waited a while, but the dogs did not reappear. Finally, Harry went back to bed.

They had just reached the portrait of the Fat Lady when it swung open and Neville came out. He was carrying a pile of books.

"What are you doing, Neville?" asked Hermione. "You're not going to the library at this time, are you?"

To their surprise, Neville blushed.

"I'm going to see Miss Graham," he said, his face red as a beet. "She - she said she was willing to help me with some of our homework."

Ron looked surprised.

"Jeanne offered to give you private tuition?"

"Actually - actually I asked her," Neville said, blushing even redder. "Well, I got to go. See you!" and he trotted off.

They looked at each other.

"Looks like Hagrid has competition," said Ron.

Harry turned to go in a hurry, and bumped into someone.

"Oh! Sorry -"

It was Jeanne. She was holding a thick pile of books.

"Jeanne!" said Harry. "What are you doing here?"

She smiled at them.

"I've been helping Neville with some of his homework," she said, "but I'm not very strong on Potions myself. So I'm just brushing up on it a bit."

"A bit?" said Ron. "You're taking half the library out with you!"

"Perhaps I could be of assistance," said a cold voice behind them.

They turned around. It was Snape.

He came forward, hook-nosed and unsmiling, ignoring the others, and looking at Jeanne.

"Should you require any assistance in this subject, Miss Graham, I should be most willing to help," he said smoothly. "You know where my office is, of course."

Jeanne looked rather pale. She stared at him for a moment before replying.

"Why - that would be very kind of you, Severus," she said politely. "Thank you for offering."

"Not at all," said Snape. He gave her a curt nod, and strode off, his robes billowing behind him.

Jeanne stared after him, her eyes wide.

"Move along there, why are you all blocking the way?" called another sharp voice.

They turned. It was Madam Pince, the librarian.

Jeanne recovered her composure.

"I have to borrow these," she said, hurrying to the counter. "I'll see you people later."

CHAPTER SEVEN

November had arrived, and the Quidditch season had started. The first match would see Slytherin playing against Hufflepuff. Harry, who had been held up because Professor Binns had wanted to see him about an essay, found himself running as fast as he could to get to the match on time.

He was passing the Charms classroom when he heard the words.

" - Sirius Black - "

Harry screeched to a stop. Had he heard wrongly? He tiptoed quietly back to the door of the Charms classroom.

"- wants to see us in Hogsmeade, I don't know why there's all this secrecy."

"But we'll miss the Quidditch match!"

Professors Flitwick and McGonagall were inside the classroom, talking. Harry looked quickly down the corridor, but there was no one to see him eavesdropping. He moved closer to listen.

"Fudge says there's something important about Black that he wants to discuss with us," Professor McGonagall was saying. "It has something to do with capturing him, I believe. He purposely chose today because everyone else will be at the match."

"Who else is going?" asked Flitwick.

"Only Albus," replied Professor McGonagall. "He didn't want too many teachers absent from the match, or people will notice."

"Where are we meeting?" asked Flitwick.

"The Three Broomsticks, at one o'clock," she replied.

Harry could hear them walking toward the door, and hastily tiptoed to the next classroom, which fortunately was empty. He waited until their footsteps had died away, then slowly started walking back toward the Gryffindor common room, thinking.

They were having a meeting to discuss Sirius Black! What could it be about? Was Sirius in danger of being captured? Should Harry not try to find out, and warn him?

Harry made up his mind. Much as he hated to, he'd have to miss the Quidditch. There was no knowing how long the match would take, and it would look very odd if he left halfway.

The common room was deserted - everyone had gone to the match. Harry went up to the bedroom and took the Invisibility Cloak out of his trunk. Feeling inside his robes for his wand, he went to the level where the hump-backed witch was.

"Dissendium," he muttered, tapping with his wand. Then he slipped inside the secret passageway, and made his way toward Hogsmeade.

He put on the Cloak when he reached Honeydukes, and then wandered around aimlessly for a while. It was too early to go to the Three Broomsticks - there was at

least another hour to go. He found himself wandering near the Shrieking Shack, and sat down under a tree.

Harry found himself waking up with a start. It was starting to rain. Cursing himself for falling asleep, he saw to his horror, that it was almost four. How could he have slept so long?

The rain was becoming heavier. Still under his Invisibility Cloak, Harry ran to the first shop with an open door that he could find - a jewellery and antique shop - but he had hardly entered it when he stopped short in surprise.

Professor Lupin was at the counter, talking to the shopkeeper.

" - haven't seen you for a long time, Remus, how about a cup of tea, she'll be taking some time to look around anyway, the ladies always do," the shopkeeper was saying.

"Not this lady," said Lupin, turning around and looking with an amused smile into the interior of the shop. "I haven't been able to get her to buy anything, all day."

Harry's eyes followed Lupin's gaze, and he started in surprise. A dark-haired lady was inside the shop, looking around. She looked like Jeanne.

The wind blew in great gusts, and some rain pattered in at the door.

"Excuse me a moment," said the shopkeeper, and to Harry's chagrin, walked over to the door and shut it, the doorchimes sounding in protest. How was he to get out now?

The rain was pouring down in torrents. Holding the Cloak firmly over his head, Harry retreated into a corner of the shop, hoping the rain would lighten up soon and that the shopkeeper would open the door again. He watched Jeanne with some interest. What were she and Lupin doing here?

She was wandering from counter to counter, looking at the bracelets and rings in a rather bored manner. However, her expression became more interested when she came over to the section where Harry was. She stopped to examine a tea set.

Harry looked around. There was a sign near him saying, "Starlight Section". He peered at some of the ornaments in the glass case next to him. They had a faint glimmer to them, like starshine. It reminded him of the frame of the mirror in the cave at Deorg's fortress.

Jeanne had finished examining the tea set. She came over to where Harry was, and he squeezed himself as far into the corner as he could, hoping she wouldn't bump into him.

She looked around in a rather idle fashion, then seemed about to leave, but then something caught her eye. Her eyes widened, and reaching out, she took down a small pendant from the counter just next to Harry.

Harry crept slightly closer and peered curiously at the pendant. It was silver in colour, and sparkled with the same starry quality as the other items in that section. He looked closer. There was something carved on the surface of the pendant, but he couldn't make out what it was.

Harry could see that Jeanne liked the pendant. There was a softness in her eyes, and the colour in her cheeks had risen slightly. She turned it around in her hands, as if looking for the price tag, but there was none.

She checked the price tags on some of the other pendants, then shook her head. With a small sigh, she took up the first pendant again and just stood there, admiring it.

A movement caught Harry's eye. Professor Lupin had come up from behind. A strange expression came over his face when he saw the pendant.

"Do you like it?" he asked.

Jeanne jumped.

"Oh!" she said, "I didn't know you were there."

"Sorry," he said, smiling.

She put the pendant back in its place.

"Aren't you going to get it?" Lupin asked, surprised. "You haven't bought a thing, all afternoon."

Her face reddened.

"Oh - I know you must think I'm really boring," she said, flushing, "but I don't really need anything. Since I got away from Deorg and came to Hogwarts, I've got everything I want."

"You like that, though," said Lupin, smiling at her, and nodding at the pendant.

She turned to look at it.

"I do like it," she admitted. "But - " she seemed to be looking for an excuse, "- I'll wait till next month. Dumbledore hasn't given me this month's salary, yet."

"Oh, that's all right," said Lupin cheerfully, reaching into his pocket. "I'll get it for you."

"Oh, no!" she cried, looking alarmed. "I didn't mean that! Please don't."

She looked at him with a rather peculiar expression on her face.

"It's - it's not the right time for me to get it, yet," she said, stammering slightly.

Lupin looked puzzled.

"Right now everything's still new and exciting for me," she explained hurriedly. Harry had the impression she was saying the first thing that popped into her head. "I'm still enjoying being at Hogwarts, and my gamekeeping work, and helping Hagrid with his classes - it's all still interesting to me."

She looked earnestly at Lupin.

"I think - I'd like to save getting the pendant for - for later, when some of the novelty has worn off, and I want to treat myself to something new."

"But the pendant might not be here, any more," objected Lupin. "Someone else might buy it."

"If I'm meant to have it, it'll still be here," she said decidedly. "That's what I always say when I can't decide whether to buy something. Oh, look - the rain's stopped. We ought to go."

She seemed to be in a hurry to get him out of the shop. Before Harry could move, they had left, the doorchimes sounding as the door swung shut. He was thinking of creeping to the door, and slipping out when the next customer came in, but now the shopkeeper had come over to the corner where he was, and was blocking his way.

Harry looked at him curiously. He seemed very old, with a hawk-like face framed by snow-white hair. His eyes were blue and very penetrating, but they looked kindly enough. He was examining the pendant that Jeanne had just put back, turning it around in his hands and looking thoughtful.

The door-chimes rang again. Professor Lupin had come back alone.

The shopkeeper turned around and smiled at Lupin.

"I know why you're back," he said, holding the pendant up with both hands.

"How much is it?" asked Lupin warily, his hand fingering his pocket.

The shopkeeper was still smiling.

"For you, Remus, and if it's for her, why, it'll cost you nothing."

Lupin flushed slightly.

"Mr Grenivere - " he began, but the shopkeeper held up a hand.

"This pendant was never for sale, Remus," he said. "It has been sitting here in my shop for years, waiting for you to come and get it."

Lupin looked dumbfounded.

"What do you mean?" he asked slowly.

The shopkeeper was taking a small box out from a nearby cupboard.

"Exactly what I say," he said, placing the pendant inside the box, "this pendant was one of several items given into my keeping, almost thirteen years ago, so that I could hand it over to you, today."

Lupin looked at him in disbelief.

"Thirteen years ago? Given into your keeping? But - who - ?"

Mr Grenivere had pressed the box into Lupin's hand, and was now steering him toward the door. Harry, seeing this was his chance, followed close behind.

"Who gave it to me, Remus?" said Grenivere, looking at Lupin with his piercing blue eyes, and smiling, "but who else knew how to craft items of this type of quality? Your grandfather, of course."

And smiling at Lupin's astonishment, Grenivere gently pushed him out the door, and shut it.

Harry had just managed to squeeze out in time. He hesitated, wondering where to go. He knew he ought to go to the Three Broomsticks, but the meeting was probably over by now. Besides, he was curious to see Jeanne's reaction when Lupin gave her the pendant.

Lupin stood outside the shop for a moment, still looking at the box in his hand. Then he tucked it inside his robes and started down the street, Harry following close behind.

He followed Lupin into a shop over which hung a sign saying "Wanda's Witches' Wardrobe". Lupin paused on entering, Harry nearly bumping into him. Looking around the store, Harry saw rows and rows of robes in all colours, seemingly stretching to the horizon. The shop was almost empty, except for a customer in the middle of the room, trying on some blue robes, helped by a fat little witch - possibly Wanda herself - and a tall, thin witch in another corner, rummaging through a box of woollens. There was no sign of Jeanne.

Lupin wandered around a bit, frowning, then since Jeanne obviously wasn't around, he turned to speak to the blue-clad lady, who had been standing there for some time, smiling and watching him.

"Excuse me, have you seen - " he began, and then stopped short, looking thunderstruck.

Jeanne was wearing the blue robes. She looked at Lupin's face, and then burst out laughing. Harry was amazed; he could hardly recognise her.

The robes were deep blue, like the colour of the sky when evening was coming on. Simple in style, they were of long, flowing satin, and they became her very well. She had tied her hair back in a ponytail.

Lupin was looking at her in amazement.

"I wouldn't have known it was you," he said, shaking his head, and smiling in disbelief.

She was still laughing, but controlled herself after a while.

"Dear, dear, how am I behaving," she said, wiping a tear away, and still shaking slightly with mirth. She looked down at the robes. "I guess I'd better return this, now."

"What, aren't you going to get it?" asked Lupin.

"Oh no, I've bought enough for today," she said brightly, for the benefit of the fat little saleswitch. She walked through a doorway labelled "fitting frame", going in on one side wearing the robes, and coming out on the other side in her own clothes. The blue robes, meanwhile, had mysteriously materialised on a nearby stand.

"And besides," she added in a low voice, as they started toward the entrance of the shop, "what on earth would I do with such a thing? I don't go out to balls, I don't -"

What else she didn't do Harry never knew, because at that moment a piercing scream rang out in his ears. It was the fat little saleswitch; she had walked right into Harry from the back.

Harry stumbled away, and the Cloak became caught on a nearby rack. It came clean off, and he was left standing there, looking extremely guilty, with Jeanne and Lupin looking at him in amazement.

"Harry! What are you doing here!" cried Jeanne, half-surprised, half-delighted.

Harry, however, didn't dare look at Professor Lupin. He extricated his Cloak from the rack and stuffed it inside his robes, and then stood there, staring at the floor, feeling extremely foolish.

They came over to him. Harry, slowly lifting his eyes, saw that Lupin was looking stern.

"Explain yourself, Harry," he said.

There was no help for it.

"The Minister of Magic was supposed to be holding a meeting in the Three Broomsticks," he mumbled, staring at the floor, "to discuss capturing Sirius Black. I overheard Professors McGonagall and Flitwick talking about it."

"And so, you decided to come along and do a little eavesdropping," said Lupin evenly.

Harry nodded glumly, still looking at the floor.

"But I got here early and fell asleep at the Shrieking Shack," he said dismally. "I woke up when it started to rain, and then ran here for shelter."

"I see," said Lupin drily.

Harry cautiously looked up. Jeanne was looking sympathetic, but Lupin was looking seriously at him.

"Well, you know the rules, Harry," Lupin said, "I am afraid I will have to take fifty points from Gryffindor."

Harry nodded. He knew he was getting off lightly; if it had been Snape, he would have tried to get Harry expelled.

"And now, I think you'd better follow us back to Hogwarts, where we can keep an eye on you," said Lupin firmly.

Jeanne gave his shoulder a sympathetic squeeze and said, "Come on, Harry."

Unfortunately, they had barely stepped out of the shop when who should they meet, but Professors Flitwick and McGonagall. Harry's heart sank.

"Potter!" said Professor McGonagall sharply, "what are you doing here?"

"Harry's with me, Professor," said Jeanne quickly. "I asked him to show me around Hogsmeade - it's my first time here, you see... I didn't know it was against school rules...I thought today was a free day...because of the Quidditch...."

"And I presume he didn't bother to enlighten you," remarked Professor McGonagall drily. "Well, Potter, you will have to be punished."

"It's all right, Minerva," said Lupin, "I've already taken fifty points from Gryffindor."

"But how come you're here, Remus!" chirped Professor Flitwick. "Didn't you stay for the Quidditch?"

"I had some business in Hogsmeade that wouldn't wait," said Lupin blandly.

Professor McGonagall raised an eyebrow.

"Oh?" she said, looking up at the signboard of the shop they had just come out of, "inside Wanda's Witches' Wardrobe? How curious - "

"Professor Lupin was just passing by when he saw us inside," explained Jeanne hurriedly. "He came in to find out why Harry was here."

Lupin turned his head away, as if to see who was coming down the street. Harry felt sure he was smiling.

"Well, we're just on our way to the Three Broomsticks for a drink," piped up Professor Flitwick. "Why don't you join us?"

"Yes, and then you're coming back with me, Potter," said Professor McGonagall grimly. "No more outings for you."

They started off down the street.

"One also wonders what the both of you are doing in Hogsmeade," said Lupin, casually.

Professor McGonagall made an exasperated noise.

"We just spent two and a half useless hours with Cornelius Fudge, trying to decide which, out of twelve different sightings of black-haired, bearded men, was Sirius Black!"

"Oh?" said Lupin, looking surprised.

Professor McGonagall seemed to be relieving some pent-up feelings.

"I never knew a greater waste of time! Fudge has to produce a report, showing he has made some progress on this case...but the fact is, absolutely no progress has been made! He thinks that by having Dumbledore's name in the report..."

"Oh Minerva, I'm sure he's trying his best," chirped Flitwick. "It's a difficult case..."

"We can't even return to the school yet, because there's a debrief in half an hour's time," continued Professor McGonagall angrily, ignoring him. "Fudge has gone with Albus to meet some Secretary or other, who's just received new information..."

But Harry was no longer listening. So he had missed the Quidditch match for nothing, and lost fifty points for Gryffindor into the bargain. He felt very depressed.

They found a group of Ministry officials already inside the Three Broomsticks, who insisted Lupin, Jeanne and Harry join them. Lupin ordered butterbeer for the three of them. Jeanne, who hadn't tried it before, looked delighted after the first taste.

The officials started talking about Sirius Black.

" - Sure it's the one in Eastbourne," said a tall, thin official with heavily lidded eyes. "Bloody murder there...three people hacked to death - just the sort of thing Black would do."

Harry felt the anger rise in him, but Lupin gave him a warning look.

"But what about the killings in Scotland?" said a pasty-faced official. "Explosion. Typical of what Black did all those years ago. The man's a monster, a killing machine...the kind whose soul feeds off this kind of thing."

Lupin looked like he was about to say something, but Jeanne spoke first.

"Actually, I don't think Sirius Black is guilty," she said.

There was a dead silence. Even Lupin looked surprised.

Lidded Eyes looked at her.

"My dear, what did you say?" he asked in a horrified tone.

Jeanne looked rather tense at having so many eyes fixed on her, but she stubbornly held her ground.

"I said, I think Sirius Black is innocent."

Pasty Face gave a short, horrified bark of laughter.

"Perhaps you'd like to clarify that," he said.

Jeanne shifted uneasily.

"Black managed to escape Azkaban," she said. "I don't believe he could have done it if he were guilty. Only an innocent man could have kept his mind there, after all those years."

"He used the Dark Arts to escape!" said Pasty Face vehemently.

"I remember seeing Black's picture, years ago, when he was imprisoned," she added. "He didn't look like a murderer to me. His eyes - "

"My dear young lady," said Lidded Eyes in a patronizing tone, "you are young, innocent and inexperienced. We should excuse her," - glancing around at the others, then turning back to Jeanne.

"I think you must have led a sheltered life, my lady," said Lidded Eyes, still in his patronizing tone. "You obviously have not seen the real world we live in. What do you know of suffering? What do you know of death, or killing?"

His voice hardened.

"Have you seen someone being butchered before?" he said harshly. "Have you seen bodies ripped apart, mercilessly, blood spewing out onto the ground, faces frozen in the grotesque agony of death? Have you heard people screaming for mercy, crying out when their life is ripped away in one senseless action?"

He paused, his eyes narrowing.

"You have not seen all this," he said softly. "You do not know what a killer looks like, what people are capable of doing."

Jeanne sat very still, her face pale, eyes wide in horror. She seemed unable to tear her eyes away from the official's face. Her hands were clenching her tankard very tightly. To Harry's alarm, bloodstains were beginning to appear on them.

Lupin noticed it too.

"Jeanne..." he said very softly, "Don't..."

She looked at Lupin, her eyes wide, then with an effort, controlled herself.

"Of - of course, you're right," she stammered to Lidded Eyes, trying to smile, "I'm just a foolish girl, speaking my mind. I should know better, of course."

Pasty Face gave a patronizing smile, and Lidded Eyes said suavely, "that's quite all right, my dear."

Jeanne lowered her eyes to her hands, where the bloodstains were fading away.

"After all," she murmured very softly, so that Harry could hardly hear her, "who am I, to judge a murderer?"

The conversation turned to other topics after that, but Harry wasn't listening. He and Lupin were looking at Jeanne rather worriedly. She seemed very subdued, finishing her drink as fast as she could, then staring at her empty tankard, obviously trying to think of an excuse to leave.

Fortunately, at this point Cornelius Fudge came in, together with Dumbledore. Lupin, on seeing them, immediately rose, saying, "I believe we must make a move..."

"Potter! You're staying here with me!" said Professor McGonagall sharply, as Harry hopefully got up. "I want to keep an eye on you!"

Harry dismally sank down in his seat again. Lupin gave Harry an encouraging nod as he went out, but Jeanne left without a look or a word.

Fudge didn't look too happy when he saw Harry there.

"Er...Minerva, some of the matters we will be discussing may be quite confidential," he said meaningfully to Professor McGonagall.

"Very well," she said crisply. "Potter, wait just outside for me. I believe this won't take more than ten minutes, Cornelius?"

Fudge shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

"Actually, it may take a little longer than that," he said vaguely, shuffling his papers. "We have some new information..."

Professor McGonagall gave an exasperated sigh.

"All right, Potter," she said, turning to Harry, "if you run fast enough, you can catch up with Professor Lupin - "

Harry was already out of his seat and heading for the door.

"Make sure you're with them -" he could hear Professor McGonagall shouting after him, "- if I find out you've been up to any more mischief, it'll be double detention for you -"

Harry sped down the street toward the road leading back to Hogwarts. The rain had cleared, but gusty winds were still blowing. There was a magnificent sunset in the western sky.

Harry jogged along, looking for Lupin and Jeanne, the sound of the wind in his ears. He found them at the crest of a hill, where they had apparently turned aside from the road for a while to look at the sunset. He was almost going to rush up to join them, when he stopped short.

Jeanne's back was facing him, but he could see Lupin's face, and he knew something was wrong. He thought he would retreat a little way, and join them when they resumed walking back to Hogwarts, but the wind had died down and silence suddenly enveloped the little hill. Harry took a step back and his foot crunched loudly on the gravel.

He didn't know why he did it, but as Lupin turned to look for the source of the noise, Harry suddenly pulled on the Invisibility Cloak in a panic. He stood there, not daring to move.

Lupin apparently hadn't seen him, because he turned back to look at Jeanne again. There was concern in his eyes, but Harry had the impression that he was waiting for her to speak first. It was so quiet that from where he was, Harry could hear almost every word they were saying.

Jeanne was silent for a while, but then spoke, suddenly.

"The sunset is beautiful, isn't it?" she said, in a strange voice.

"It is," said Lupin, his eyes not leaving her face.

She turned her face slightly away from Lupin, so that Harry could see her profile. She was biting her lip.

"If I had a clear conscience, I could look at such a sunset and enjoy it, without any inhibition," she continued.

Lupin remained silent.

She turned and looked at him.

"Do you remember that night in the clearing - you stopped me killing myself."

"I remember," said Lupin, quietly.

She turned to face the sky again, but Harry felt that she was seeing something else.

"When I was living in that cave," she said quietly, "I used to dream of the time when I'd gain my freedom again. I thought to myself, 'One day this nightmare will end. I'll walk again free under the stars. I'll feel the wind on my face, hear it rustling in the trees, and feel at peace again with nature and the world.'"

She paused.

"That night in the clearing, that wish should have come true. I woke up in the middle of the night. I looked up at the stars, I could hear the wind in the trees..."

She lowered her head to look down into the valley.

"...But I didn't feel at peace," she said softly.

She shook her head slowly.

"The stars were shining in the sky, the wind was moving in the trees...but I wasn't one with them any more. I was cut off from them. They were together, clean and in harmony. But I was dirty and alone. The dirt was inside me, in my heart and in my soul. I couldn't wash it away."

She was quiet for a few seconds, thinking, then continued.

"I thought, if I transformed into a bird, I might be able to leave this feeling behind; but - but it didn't work. I was soaring through the sky, but inside me, my heart just felt like a stone."

A tear must have rolled down her cheek, because Harry could see her dashing it angrily away. Her hands were stained bright red with blood again.

"Jeanne..." began Lupin.

"I'll always be unclean inside," she said angrily with a sob. "Always. There's nowhere I can run. I can run from Deorg, but I can't run away from myself. I'll carry this weight in my heart to my dying day!"

"Jeanne, stop it!" said Lupin sternly.

"I have dreams at night," she continued, ignoring him. "Horrible dreams. I hear people screaming. I see the look of horror in their eyes - "

"Jeanne!" said Lupin.

He caught her by the shoulders, forcing her to face him.

"Look at me, Jeanne," he said sternly. "Look at me!"

She looked at him defiantly.

"You are not evil," said Lupin sternly. "Deorg was possessing you. You were just the tool he used. Everything you did there was beyond your control. Stop blaming yourself for it!"

She was crying a bit, shaking with angry sobs. Controlling herself, she started talking very fast.

"Remus, if someone used a knife to kill someone you love - say your parents, and you later got hold of that knife, wouldn't it always be unclean for you? Would you ever use it as a normal knife? Wouldn't you want to destroy it? I'm that knife, I'm - "

"But you're not a knife, Jeanne, you're not a knife!" said Lupin angrily, giving her another shake. "You're a human being."

He stopped, because his own voice was shaking with emotion. He steadied it, then continued more quietly.

"I know you went through horrors during those years. I know they haunt you every day. But Deorg has gone now. You've got a chance to start over...you have a new life now.

"I've seen you fighting hard these past few months, Jeanne. You're doing fine, ...all the work you do for Hagrid, helping him with his classes, helping Neville with his work, helping Madam Pomfrey...and what you do for me..."

He looked at her seriously.

"Don't throw it all away just because of the words of some idiotic fool, who doesn't know anything about life and never will. Have more faith in yourself. You hate yourself for what you've done; but there are people who care about you...Hagrid, myself, Harry, Dumbledore...we all want to help you. Don't let us down."

She grew quiet as his words sank in. The bloodstains faded from her hands. She wiped away her tears, and sniffed, then gave herself a little shake.

"You're right, of course," she said, in a muffled voice. Taking out her handkerchief, she blew her nose, then pocketed it.

"I don't know what got into me," she said, sounding subdued. "I just let that fellow get to me. Sorry."

Lupin looked sharply at her.

"Are you sure you're all right?" he said.

"Yes, yes, I'm fine," she said, not looking at him. She turned back toward the road. "It's getting late. We'd better go back."

She started walking back to the road. Lupin watched her for a moment, then gave a small shrug and followed. As they started off down the road, he turned, and looked straight at where Harry was standing.

"Come along, Harry. I know you're there. I saw you before you disappeared."

Harry felt his face burning. He removed the Cloak, and walked slowly toward them.

"Harry?" said Jeanne, looking at him. Traces of tears were still visible on her face. "Are you spying on us again?"

"I didn't mean to..." Harry said, agonized. "Professor McGonagall...she sent me after you..."

Jeanne put her arm around his shoulders, and gave him a quick squeeze.

"I don't mind, so long as it's you. You were there, weren't you... you saw what I went through..." Her voice trailed off. She sighed and walked up the road.

CHAPTER EIGHT

One cold December afternoon found Harry trudging through snow, making his way to Hagrid's on his own. Hermione had decided to stay in the library and finish an essay, and Ron had gone to see Madam Pomfrey because he had a cold.

Hagrid wasn't in his cabin when Harry arrived. Only Jeanne was there, sitting by the fireplace with a large, empty tankard in one hand, and Hagrid's pink umbrella in the other.

"Hagrid said he was taking Fang to the lake to look at something," she said to Harry. "If you wait a while, he'll probably be back soon."

"OK," said Harry. He looked at the tankard in her hand.

"What are you doing?" he asked curiously.

She held a finger to her lips.

"It's Hagrid's Christmas present. Don't let him know."

"A tankard?" said Harry, surprised.

She smiled.

"Well, I can't afford much, you know," she said, "and I want something Hagrid will find useful. He likes drinking. Once I've decorated it, it'll be a good enough present. Look."

She held the tip of the umbrella to the rim of the tankard, so that it was almost touching it, and traced a wavy shape in the air. A delicate pattern of flowers and leaves appeared, etched in the metal, following the direction of the umbrella.

Harry was fascinated.

"It's nice," he said. "But you don't really need the umbrella, do you?"

Jeanne looked rather surprised, then saw him looking at her tunic.

"Ah, yes, I conjured this up, without a wand," she said, glancing down at her green and brown clothing. "I could try conjuring up a finished tankard, I suppose, but I'm not really good at conjuring metal. I'm much better with fabric."

She saw that Harry was looking puzzled, and smiled.

"When I was in Russia, we lived among the Muggles, I suppose because that made it more difficult for Deorg to find us. My foster mother used to run a dressmaker's shop, so I had plenty of practice conjuring fabric, and became fairly proficient after a while."

Harry remembered something Lupin had said.

"In Kamchatka, some of the wizards don't need wands to do magic," he said.

Jeanne looked at him in surprise. She placed the tankard and umbrella in her lap, and looked thoughtful.

"That's different," she said. "It has to do with the volcanoes...they're the source of a powerful type of magic. Their magic is in the air, all around. It affects the way we perform some of our usual spells - did you notice? Like the way we Apparate..."

She picked up the tankard and umbrella again.

"Some of the wizards there have learned how to draw on the volcanoes' magic. But it's dangerous, if you don't know how to handle it properly. And it only works in Kamchatka, where the volcanoes are."

She began etching a pattern near the base of the tankard with the umbrella.

"Deorg managed to master that art, to some extent," she said. "It made him very dangerous, inside Kamchatka. That's why Dumbledore needed all the other wizards to help him. You need a very fine control, if you're unleashing large amounts of magic. If you draw too much out, you can lose control and end up destroying yourself and anyone else around you."

She looked at the tankard.

"There - I've finished the base and the rim. Now for the final touch."

She held the tankard close to the fire, and concentrated. Harry gave a small gasp of surprise. The tankard was glowing; flames were flickering within its polished metal surface, as if trapped inside it.

"How did you do that?" Harry asked.

Jeanne placed the flickering tankard on the floor at her feet, and sitting cross-legged, looked at it. Her usual sullen expression had disappeared. Instead, she had a dreamy look on her face.

"It's an old and dying art," she said, running her finger idly round the rim of the tankard. "Not many people practise it any more. I learned it when I was little. Sunlight, moonlight, starlight, firelight...I can trap them all within any object. The starlight is the most difficult, because it takes a long time to collect, but I love it the best."

Harry remembered the jewellery shop in Hogsmeade. No wonder she had been so interested in the Starlight Section, he thought.

"Can you teach me?" he asked.

Jeanne frowned slightly.

"I don't really know how," she said slowly. "I wasn't formally taught, as a child. I just watched it being done, and somehow picked it up."

Harry was curious. "Who did you learn it from?"

Her expression softened.

"An elderly gentleman taught me," she replied. "He ran the jewellery shop in our village. That was when we were still living in England...before we fled to Russia."

She paused.

"The other village children didn't like me very much, you know - because I was Chinese, and because I was a shape-shifter," she went on, "so I used to wander around a lot on my own. I was attracted to the pretty things in the jewellery shop. The shopkeeper was a kind old gentleman who was quite liberal with sweets, so I began

visiting him very often."

She looked at Harry.

"I wasn't really close to my foster parents. My foster father was a very reserved man. He was my teacher, and he was extremely strict. My foster mother too had a fiery temper. So I turned to the old jeweller for affection. He used to put me on his knee and tell me lots of stories, and listen to all the nonsensical things I had to tell him. I called him "Grandpa" and pretended he was really my grandfather."

She smiled, but there were tears in her eyes.

"What happened to him?" asked Harry, listening intently.

"I never knew," she said sadly. "When we fled, I wasn't allowed to keep in touch with him. My foster father said it was too dangerous. I guess he must have passed away, it was so long ago."

Harry didn't know what to say, so he was silent for a while, staring at the flames leaping within the tankard's shining surface.

There was a crunching of footsteps from outside, and the sound of barking. Jeanne, who had been gazing into the fire, started up.

"Hagrid's back!" she said in a panic, grabbing the tankard and stuffing it into her bag.

Hagrid came in with Fang, shaking snow off his cloak. He had a slightly puzzled look on his face, and hardly seemed to notice Harry.

"Is something wrong?" asked Jeanne, automatically picking up the pink umbrella and pointing it at the melting snow on the floor. The snow sizzled as if on a frying pan, then evaporated.

"Yes an' no," said Hagrid, still frowning and looking puzzled. He sat down and started taking off his boots, still shedding snow from his clothes. Jeanne sat down near him, idly pointing the umbrella at each falling lump of snow and annihilating it just before it reached the floor.

"- brought Fang here down to the lake ter look at them wolf-tracks," continued Hagrid,

pulling off one boot, " - but he didn' react the way I expect'd."

A little shower of fine snow fell to the floor as Hagrid jerked off the other boot. Jeanne had lowered the umbrella and was staring at Hagrid. Harry thought she looked more dismayed than surprised.

"Wolf-tracks?" she repeated.

"That's wha' I thought they were," growled Hagrid, shedding his cloak and shaking more snow off it. "But Fang here, he didn' act like they was, when I ask'd him ter look at it, he just sniff'd at it, an' then sat back an' look'd up at me, waggin' his tail, his tongue out of his mouth. He look'd like he was laughin' at me!"

He glared at Fang, who lolled his tongue out in a smile and wagged his tail.

Jeanne looked at Fang, and suddenly laughed. She resumed cleaning up the snow with the umbrella.

Hagrid looked grumpy.

"Beats me what those tracks are. Thought it was wolves, but now I ain't so sure."

Harry jumped up.

"I saw what made them!" he said excitedly. "It must be the same animals I saw a month ago! I saw them running by the lake!"

Jeanne looked up quickly.

"You saw them?"

Harry nodded.

"From the bedroom window. It was full moon that night. They were running along the lake. I couldn't see exactly what they were, but they looked like dogs - or wolves."

Hagrid was frowning at Harry.

"Ain't no dogs on these grounds except fer Fang here. If it's wolves it ain't no good

thing - jus' need one or two students ter sneak out o' bed up ter some prank an' run down to the lake, an' get hurt."

"Wolves don't usually attack people, Hagrid," said Jeanne.

"Normal wolves, no," growled Hagrid, "but werewolves do. An' there are plenty o' them in the Forbidden Forest. If they're startin' ter come down to the lake, it ain't no good thing."

A sudden thought came to Harry. He looked at Jeanne, whose face was turned away from him. She was drying up the last of the snow.

No, it can't be, thought Harry.

"Tell you what, Hagrid," said Jeanne, putting the umbrella back in the corner, "why don't I just ask Fang. He should know if they were werewolves or not."

Hagrid's face brightened.

Jeanne went and knelt by Fang, and said something to him. Harry thought it sounded more like she was telling him to do something, rather than asking a question.

Fang gave a few short, sharp barks, then sat back with his tongue lolling out of his mouth. He looked as if he was laughing.

Jeanne smiled, and seemed to be blushing slightly. She stood up, and looked at Hagrid.

"Fang says he has met those two wolves before, Hagrid," she said. "He says he knows them, and that they won't hurt anyone. They just - they just like running by the lake when the moon is full."

Hagrid looked astonished.

"He knows 'em?" he said. "I never knew Fang knew any wolves."

"I must get back to the castle," said Jeanne, picking up her bag. "Madam Pomfrey said I could give her a hand, this evening."

She waved goodbye to Harry, and disappeared through the door. Harry sat staring after

her. He felt sure she had not told the entire truth.

CHAPTER NINE

It was almost Christmas, and they were all gathered in Hagrid's cabin; a splendid fire was roaring in the grate, and an assortment of Christmas goodies lay on the table. Besides the usual sweets from Honeydukes, there were also several interesting Russian cakes contributed by Jeanne. The cakes obviously contained alcohol, because some of them were singing softly in drunken voices, hiccuping at intervals, while the rest were snoring. There was also a large tin containing a variety of biscuits shaped like various different animals, which kept wandering around. Several actually managed to jump out, but were immediately pounced on and eaten by Crookshanks, who had stationed himself next to the tin.

Harry, Ron and Hermione were sitting around the table, helping themselves liberally to the food, while Hagrid and Jeanne were sitting near the fire, sorting out a huge pile of fir cones, according to size.

"What are all those cones for, Hagrid?" asked Hermione curiously, giving a vodka-flavoured mouse to Crookshanks.

"Have ter decorate the Hall," grunted Hagrid, gathering a pile of sorted cones and putting it into a basket. "Christmas Ball's comin'. Dumbledore's throwin' one 'cos it's Hogwarts' One Thousandth, One Hundredth an' Thirteenth Anniversary. People from all over th' county should be attendin'."

Jeanne looked up in surprise.

"A Ball?" she said. "I thought this was just for the normal Christmas feast."

"Won't be much people at th' feast," pointed out Hagrid. "Everyone's gone home for the holidays. Only students are these three here, an' Neville. No, we don' need so much decorat'ns fer the Feast. It's the Ball that's the Big Event. There'll be plenty o' food, an' music, an' dancin'."

He flicked a glance at Jeanne.

"Yeh'll be comin', o' course," he said.

Jeanne didn't look very enthusiastic.

"Maybe," she said vaguely. She sorted out a few more cones.

"I don't know how to dance," she said, her eyes on the cones, and seeming to be talking to no one in particular, "and I haven't got anything to wear."

"Oh, Jeanne," said Harry, exasperated. "You know you can jolly well conjure up something."

"No need ter worry 'bout dancin', neither," said Hagrid. "The Silver Supremes are doin' the music, an' when yeh dance to their music, yer feet'll know what ter do."

Jeanne looked noncommittal.

"We'll see," she said.

"The Silver Supremes?" said Ron. "Who are they?"

"Ghost orchestra," said Hagrid, still looking at Jeanne. "Famous. Jus' back from their world tour. Haven' yeh heard of them?"

"Of course," said Hermione. "They've won lots of awards...the Magical Music award, the Soothing Sounds award..."

"You should go to the Ball, Jeanne," said Ron, picking up a snoring rum cake. It woke up, hiccupped, and then went back to sleep again. "You don't have to dance. Just sit with all of us, and eat all the great food."

"No, she ought ter dance," Hagrid disagreed. "Mix around more. There'll be lots o' handsome young wizards there, yeh'll have a good chance ter know them."

Jeanne didn't look up. She was still rapidly sorting fir cones.

"I'm not really interested, Hagrid," she said, a rather bored expression on her face instead of her usual sullen one. "This kind of thing isn't really my cup of tea."

Hagrid suddenly looked sly.

"Neville'll be there," he said. "I'm sure he'll want ter dance with yeh. An' Professor Snape...an' Professor Lupin."

"Professor Lupin?" said Hermione, looking up in surprise.

Jeanne had finished sorting the fir cones. Her face expressionless, she picked up the pink umbrella and started pointing it at each cone, turning it to a golden colour.

"I didn't know Professor Lupin was one of Jeanne's admirers," said Hermione, looking at Hagrid.

Hagrid's eyes twinkled.

"Course he is," he chuckled. "Otherwise, why do yeh think Jeanie's never around durin' full moon?"

Jeanne looked up at this.

"Come on, Hagrid," she said, rather impatiently. "I told you, that's the time I'm helping Madam Pomfrey."

"Maybe," said Hagrid, "But why durin' full moon?"

"Because," said Jeanne, pushing aside a basket of gilded cones with her foot, "That's the time when Madam Pomfrey is busiest."

"It is?" said Hermione, looking interested. "But, why?"

"Madam Pomfrey usually prepares a tonic for Professor Lupin during full moon," explained Jeanne. She had finished the gilding now, and began to turn the remaining cones silver instead. "The tonic is quite tedious to prepare. So I normally give her a helping hand during that period."

"But, I thought Snape was the one making the potion," said Harry.

"Severus is the one preparing the Wolfsbane potion," agreed Jeanne, lowering the umbrella for a while and looking up. "Madam Pomfrey's tonic is a different one. It helps to make Professor Lupin less ill during that period."

"No wonder he's been looking better, lately," said Ron.

He bit on a rum cake, which said, "Ouch!" and then was silent.

"Remus told Madam Pomfrey not to bother with the tonic, because it isn't really that vital for him to take it," said Jeanne, raising the umbrella again, "but Madam Pomfrey's too kind to stop making it."

Hagrid was not about to give up.

"Someone's bin fixin' Professor Lupin's clo'es, too," he said. "Ain't new, an' still rather threadworn, but all them patches an' darns have disappeared."

Jeanne looked amused.

"So you think I mended them?" she said, smiling. "Don't you think it's more likely that Remus finally realised it would be easier to patch his robes using magic? He should have done it long ago." She bent over the cones again.

Hagrid stubbornly persisted.

"Yeh avoidin' the answer, Jeanie," he said. "Did yeh or didn' yeh mend them?"

"If I had decided to fix them, I'd just conjure brand new robes for him," said Jeanne decidedly. She looked up from the cones.

"Why are you pushing this, Hagrid?" she asked, smiling. "You're not jealous, are you? After all, I do all your cooking and cleaning and mending."

Hagrid blushed.

Jeanne's smile grew broader.

"You haven't got the hint, yet, Hagrid," she said, her eyes twinkling wickedly. "I'm still waiting for a proposal from you. When are you going to ask me to marry you?"

It had the effect she intended. Hagrid went red as a beet, and dropped the subject for the rest of the evening. Harry, however, noticed Hermione looking very thoughtfully at Jeanne.

"They would make a rather nice couple," she was saying softly to herself.

It was Christmas morning. Harry was sitting on his bed, unwrapping his presents. There was the usual sweater from Mrs Weasley...

"What colour is yours?" asked Ron from the floor, where he was busy with his own pile. He tore a parcel open and groaned.

"...I got maroon again!"

"Mine's blue," said Harry. He picked up his last parcel. It was flat and hard, and beautifully wrapped, with his name written on it in neat, flowing letters.

"Who's this from?" he wondered.

Ron came over to look.

"Oh, it's Jeanne," he said. "Mine had the same wrapping. She gave me a new holder for my quill."

Harry unwrapped the present carefully. The paper was so pretty that it seemed a crime to tear it.

"Oh," said Ron, in surprise.

It was a framed photograph. The photo frame was silver in colour and elegantly carved; a soft sparkling light emanated from it, swirling and shimmering in an endless whirl. But it was the photograph that made Harry's heart skip a beat.

It was a photograph of his parents - together with him! There he was, standing in front - he looked younger, around twelve or so - and his mother was standing behind him with her arms around his waist. She was smiling happily. His father stood with one arm around his mother, and the other extended forward, hand on Harry's shoulder.

"How did she do that?" asked Ron, gaping at it in astonishment.

Harry couldn't speak. There was a lump in his throat.

He found Jeanne in one corner of the Great Hall, putting the final touches on the decorations. She smiled when she saw him.

"Merry Christmas, Harry," she said.

"Merry Christmas," he answered.

"Did you like my present?" she asked, looking at him.

Harry opened his mouth to reply, but the memory of the photograph came back to him and he suddenly found he couldn't speak; so he just nodded.

She saw the expression on his face, and her voice was very gentle as she said,

"Initially I planned to just give you a photograph of your parents, Harry...But as time went by, the idea of including you in the picture kept staying in my head. I wanted, myself, so much to see you together with your family...so I went ahead and did it. I'm sorry if - if, you know..." She broke off.

Harry found his voice.

"No, I do like it, really," he said. "Thank you."

She smiled, and to his surprise, gave him a quick hug.

"How did you do it?" he asked, when she had let him go.

Her eyes danced with mischief. She glanced around, to make sure no one was listening, then leaned forward and spoke in a low voice.

"Don't tell anyone," she said. "Professor Flitwick has a computer in his office. I sneaked in one night and used it. It has a program that lets you combine two different photographs together."

Harry was surprised.

"But - computers can't work in Hogwarts," he pointed out. "There's too much magic in the air."

"Yes," she agreed, "but Professor Flitwick somehow managed to charm the computer into working here. He charmed everything - the software, the scanner and the printer. He spent quite a while figuring out how to do it."

Harry thought of something else.

"Where did you get the photographs?" he asked.

Jeanne smiled.

"Professor Lupin gave me the photograph of your parents," she answered. "I got the one of you from Colin Creevey." She looked impishly at him. "He had quite a large collection to choose from."

She laughed, and something at her throat sparkled.

Harry blinked. It was the pendant from Mr Grenivere's shop.

She saw him looking at it.

"Do you like it?" she asked, glancing down at it herself. "It's from Hogsmeade."

Harry looked closer. Carved on the pendant were two wolves.

He was going to say something, but at this point Neville came running up with a parcel in his hands. It was obviously a gift for Jeanne, and Harry, feeling that Neville would rather give it to her alone, excused himself and left.

"Quite a picture, isn't it?" said Ron.

The Christmas Ball had begun. The Great Hall looked magnificent. Glittering Christmas trees ran down the entire length of one side, and the other three sides were festooned with shining decorations. The Hall was filling up rapidly with witches and wizards, all in their best robes.

Harry, Ron and Hermione were standing near the entrance of the Hall, together with Hagrid, when Professor McGonagall came in, together with Professors Lupin and Flitwick. Lupin was still wearing his usual robes, which, Harry noticed, showed no trace of patches and frays now.

Professor McGonagall looked at them for a moment, then asked, "Where is Miss Graham?"

"She wouldn't come, Professor McGonagall ma'am," said Hagrid. "Tried me bes' ter persuade her, but she said nobody'd miss her, there're so many other fine folk here an' all."

Professor McGonagall was not pleased.

"This is the School's One Thousandth, One Hundredth and Thirteenth Anniversary," she snapped. "All the staff are required to attend."

She signalled to Lupin.

"Remus, come with me," she said briskly. "We're going to go and get her."

She disappeared out of the Hall together with Lupin.

Harry, Ron and Hermione looked at each other. Then, as one, they turned and ran after them. They didn't want to miss the fun.

Professor McGonagall swept up to Jeanne's room, and knocked smartly on the door.

"I told you, I'm not coming, Hagrid," came Jeanne's voice faintly from inside. "Do stop pestering me and go away."

"This is not Hagrid, Miss Graham," said Professor McGonagall, in a sharp, loud voice. She gave the door one tap with her wand, and it flew open.

Jeanne was standing near the door, looking startled. Professor McGonagall swept inside and looked at her.

"All the staff are required to attend tonight's Ball, Miss Graham," she said in a sharp, rippling tone. "You will accompany me to the Hall at once. Before that, though, we have to see that you are properly attired." She raised her wand, but Lupin held up a hand.

"Allow me, Minerva," he said.

He pointed his wand at Jeanne. There was a flash of light, and there was Jeanne, looking distinctly startled, wearing the blue robes from Wanda's Witches' Wardrobe.

Professor McGonagall looked speculatively from Jeanne to Lupin.

"Very nice, Remus," she commented. "I had no idea you were so well-versed in ladies' fashion."

Lupin said nothing, but merely stood there with arms folded, smiling and admiring his handiwork.

Jeanne opened her mouth to protest.

"We just need the finishing touches, then," said Professor McGonagall briskly, ignoring her. She pointed her wand. "Hair," - Jeanne's hair was piled high, to fall in curls at her shoulder; "Shoes," - heels appeared on her feet; "and - makeup!" Jeanne's lips were suddenly redder, her eyebrows sharper in outline.

"Now, march!" barked Professor McGonagall, and she marched poor Jeanne all the way back to the Hall, with Lupin following and looking amused, and Harry, Ron and Hermione almost beside themselves with mirth.

Jeanne shrank back when she saw the crowd in the Hall, but Dumbledore was suddenly there.

"Ah, Jeanne, just the person," he said cheerfully, taking hold of her arm and propelling her toward a group of young wizards. "There are some people I'd like you to meet. Marcus, this is Jeanne Graham..."

Harry filled himself liberally with delicious food from the tables at one end of the Hall, and he and Ron took Hermione round the dance floor a few times, but other than that, they spent most of the night sitting in one corner of the Hall with Hagrid and Neville, drinking and eating titbits, and watching Jeanne as she danced with a seemingly endless stream of young wizards. She did stop at one point to eat something, during which time they lost sight of her because the wizards were all surrounding her.

"Jeanne's having some night, huh, Harry?" said Ron, as they watched a curly-haired wizard leading her out for a waltz. "So much for her saying she can't dance!"

"The music takes care of that," said Harry, glancing over at the group of silver ghosts who were merrily playing away. "Somehow your feet just end up doing what they're supposed to."

"Look!" said Hermione, excitedly. "The tall one's going to try cutting in again!"

They watched as a tall, handsome wizard waltzed up with a blonde witch. He smoothly cut in between Jeanne and the curly-haired wizard, and whisked her off.

"Curly-Hair's got the blonde now," said Ron.

"She doesn't look too pleased about it," remarked Harry, as he watched the wizard lead the pouting blonde away. A minute later, they were lost in the crowd.

It was almost midnight before Jeanne got away. She came walking slowly toward their corner, looking extremely tired. Without saying a word, she sat down in an empty chair nearby, leaned back, and closed her eyes.

Hagrid was sitting in the chair next to Harry, his Christmas tankard in his hand. He seemed to be making full use of it that night, and showed no signs of stopping. He beamed when he saw Jeanne.

"Busy night, eh, Jeanie?"

Jeanne didn't move.

"Musta' broken a lot o' hearts tonight," continued Hagrid, "all them wizards cuttin' in for a sixth an' seventh round. Look at Neville here, only managed ter dance four times with yeh."

"No, I didn't!" squeaked Neville, blushing rosy red.

Jeanne still didn't move.

"But Jeanie hasn' danced with everyone yet," Hagrid went on, taking another swig from his tankard. "She lef' out some importan' people..."

Jeanne's eyes were still closed, but her lips moved.

"Shut up, Hagrid."

"...she lef' me out," said Hagrid, ignoring her, "...an' lef' Harry out too...an' Ron...an' Professor Lupin - "

Lupin, who was sitting a short distance away, talking to Professor Flitwick, looked in their direction.

"Did I hear my name?" he inquired.

Hagrid took another swig from his tankard before replying. His face was very red.

"I was jus' sayin', Professor Lupin, sir, that Jeanie here has danced with nearly everyone in the room - "

" - except me," said a cold voice.

Harry looked up. Professor Snape was standing in front of them.

Hook-nosed, his eyes with a curious glitter in them, he walked over to Jeanne, who was now sitting up with her eyes open.

"I don't believe I've had the pleasure, yet," said Snape smoothly, extending a hand.

Jeanne had gone very pale under her makeup. She sat there, as if frozen, staring up at Snape. For a second, Harry thought she was going to refuse him. Then, without a word, she got up and allowed him to lead her to the dance floor.

Harry glanced at Lupin. He was watching Snape and Jeanne with a curious expression in his eyes.

Ron, Hermione, Neville and Hagrid were watching in shock. Neville looked absolutely horrified.

"I don't believe it," whispered Hermione, her voice shaking slightly.

Snape was dancing with Jeanne and looking at her. At first, she returned his stare; but after a while lowered her gaze and stared at the floor. Snape, however, continued to stare at her.

Ron's mouth was slightly open, and his eyes were popping out of his head.

"It's bizarre," he kept saying. "It's just totally bizarre."

Harry saw a movement to his left. Professor McGonagall had come up to join them.

"Can I believe my eyes?" she inquired. "Is that Severus Snape with Jeanne on the dance floor?"

Snape was still staring at Jeanne, his eyes boring into her like gimlets. From where they were sitting, she looked very pale.

"I don't think she can take it very much longer," said Harry. "Neville, why don't you cut in and save her."

Neville turned white as a sheet at the thought.

Something distracted Snape for a moment, and Jeanne turned to look in their direction. Her expression clearly said, "Help me!!"

Professor McGonagall pressed her lips together.

"I do believe we must rescue her soon, before Severus makes her pass out on the dance floor." She looked at Lupin. "Remus, would you care for a dance?"

Lupin had a rather set expression on his face. He got up without a word and went off with Professor McGonagall.

They watched as Lupin and Professor McGonagall danced up to Jeanne and Snape. Then all of a sudden Lupin was dancing with Jeanne, and Professor McGonagall was firmly leading Snape to another part of the Hall.

"Jeanne sure looks relieved," said Ron. "Look, she's smiling at Lupin!"

Hermione suddenly got up with a determined look on her face.

"Come on, Ron," she said, grabbing his hand. "Let's go listen to what they're saying!"

"Hermione, are you bats?" said Ron, as she pulled him to the dance floor. "This is daft -"

Harry watched as Hermione dragged Ron off.

"They look good t'gether, don' they, Harry?"

Harry turned to look at Hagrid, who suddenly didn't seem so drunk after all. He realised that Hagrid was talking about Jeanne and Lupin.

"Yeah," said Harry evasively, looking over at the dance floor again. Jeanne was saying something, and Lupin was smiling.

Hagrid looked at Harry.

"Yeh awful quiet whenever any of us tease Jeanie with Professor Lupin," he said.

Harry didn't know what to say.

"Fact is," said Hagrid, turning to look at Lupin and Jeanne again, "firs' time I saw 'em in the staff room that night, I knew they was together."

Harry looked at Hagrid in astonishment.

"Don' ask me why," said Hagrid. "I jus' had the feelin'. An' yeh know it too, same as me. Yeh've seen somethin', haven't yeh, Harry, that yeh aren't tellin' the rest of us." He looked at Harry.

Harry tried to arrange his thoughts.

"I don't know how to say it," he said slowly. "To Ron and Hermione, it's just a game. Jeanne's just like any other normal person to them. They didn't see what it was like in Kamchatka..."

His voice trailed off. He looked at Hagrid, and saw that he was listening intently.

"Jeanne's got stuff going on in her that we don't see," Harry continued. "The memory of all those people she killed still haunts her. And somehow Professor Lupin's the only one who knows what's going on inside her."

He stopped. He couldn't see Lupin and Jeanne any more. The lights had dimmed now, and the music was becoming slower and more romantic.

"That night in Kamchatka when we first got her away from Deorg, she tried to kill herself," said Harry. "She conjured up a knife and was going to stab herself. And Lupin stopped her. He knew exactly what to say to make her put the knife down. I wouldn't have known what to do; all I could do was stand there and watch."

Hagrid was still listening. He had set his tankard down on his knee, and it sat there, flickering and forgotten.

"There's some other stuff I saw too, which - which I can't mention," said Harry. "But they knew I was watching them. They seemed to trust that I wouldn't gossip or tell on them."

"An' yeh didn't," said Hagrid.

Harry was silent a moment.

"Professor Lupin hasn't had an easy life," he said. "He deserves a chance to be happy. I just want it to work out for them, and all this idiotic teasing isn't going to help."

He stopped, because Ron and Hermione had come back. Ron was furious.

"You're nutters, Hermione," he said, sounding exasperated. "Why on earth should there be anything between Jeanne and Lupin? Sure, he helped get her out of Kamchatka, but since she's been at Hogwarts, they've hardly been seen together. She's always at Hagrid's...or helping Neville...or with Madam Pomfrey. I bet she even spends more time with Snape, discussing Potions, than she's ever been with Lupin!"

Hermione was strangely quiet. She sat down in the chair next to Harry, her eyes wide.

"What's the matter?" asked Harry.

Hermione's eyes went even wider.

"They're in love," she said, in a strange voice.

"What?" said Ron, "Are you crazy?"

"I saw them looking at each other, before the lights dimmed," said Hermione in a low voice. "They're in love, Ron."

"Rubbish, they were talking," said Ron, "and after that they didn't say a thing. I didn't see them exchanging any funny looks."

Hermione was silent. There was a slightly awed look in her eyes.

Harry got up.

"Time to call it a night," he said. "I'm going to bed."

Harry had hardly entered the Gryffindor common room when he heard Hermione calling after him.

"Wait a moment, Harry," she gasped, running up, and panting.

"What is it?" he asked, startled.

She didn't speak for a while, trying to catch her breath. Then, she looked at him with an eager expression in her eyes.

"I'd like - I'd like to borrow the Marauder's Map," she said.

What?" said Harry. "What on earth for?"

"It shows - it shows you the location of every person in Hogwarts," said Hermione, still panting a bit.

"So - ?" said Harry, then stopped and looked at her.

"No way," he said.

"But -"

"Forget it, Hermione," said Harry, becoming cross with her. "Why don't you just leave them alone? It isn't any of your business anyway. If there really is anything - which isn't likely - then it's between them and them alone."

He turned, and started going up to the dormitory.

Hermione followed him.

"But Harry -"

"No, and that's final," said Harry. "If you want to spy on them, just follow them and see where they go."

"I tried," said Hermione. "The dance has ended. People are leaving. And they've disappeared...there's no sign of them."

"Good," said Harry, "and good night to you!"

And he went into the bedroom, and shut the door.

However, he couldn't sleep. He lay a while, listening to Ron's snoring.

Then he slowly got out of bed, and felt about in his trunk for the Marauder's Map.

He found it. He was about to unroll it, but stopped.

"What are you doing?" he said to himself. "Lupin gave you this Map. How can you use it to spy on him?"

He started to put it back, then stopped.

"After all, I wish them well," he said to himself. "I just want to know whether it's really working for them or not."

He took out his wand, muttered "Lumos!" and unrolled the Map.

He looked in Lupin's room, then in Jeanne's, but they weren't there.

Puzzled, he slowly scanned through the entire Map. Dumbledore was still up, talking to some people in his office. Professor Flitwick was in his bedroom. Snape was talking to Filch. But where were Jeanne and Lupin?

"It's not possible," he whispered. "They don't seem to be anywhere in Hogwarts."

He examined the Map a while longer, puzzled. Then, feeling ashamed of himself for being such a busybody, he rolled it up and put it back in his trunk, and went back to bed.

CHAPTER TEN

After the Christmas Ball, Hermione seemed to be keeping a sharp lookout for signs that Jeanne and Professor Lupin were a couple, but to her disappointment, there were none. Jeanne still persisted in going down to Hagrid's cabin for all her meals, instead of joining the staff table in the Great Hall, where Lupin was. She wouldn't come to the Hall even if Hagrid was eating there. Perhaps Harry was imagining it, but she seemed to be looking even more sullen and serious lately, and was finding more and more work for herself to do than ever. Harry thought that even Lupin sometimes looked rather serious, though for the most part he was still his usual cheerful self.

"I'm just looking too hard and imagining it," Harry said to himself. "Hermione's idiocy is beginning to rub off on me."

One afternoon several weeks after the Ball, they were all gathered around Hagrid's table having tea. Jeanne did not join them; she was sitting near the fire, surrounded by a strange assortment of plantlike objects and tree bark. She was systematically shredding them and putting them into jars, while reading from a thick book at the same time.

"Whatever are you doing with all that stuff, Jeanne?" wondered Hermione.

Jeanne was reading something from the book, and only looked up after a few moments.

"- What? Oh, Severus Snape wants help with some of the potions research he's doing," she said, shredding more tree bark. "He doesn't have a lot of time, with all his classes, so I'm just helping him gather some of the ingredients."

"You're helping Snape - ?" said Ron, surprised.

Jeanne nodded, still shredding treebark. Her eyes wandered back to the book.

"What book is that?" asked Harry curiously, coming over to take a look.

Jeanne lifted it up with some difficulty, because it was so heavy. Harry read, "Recent Developments in Potions and Tonics".

Jeanne buried her nose in the book again. She threw some bark into a jar, then gave an exclamation of dismay.

"Oh - ! It's the wrong jar...now it's all mixed up!"

She emptied the jar on the floor and began separating the two different types of bark.

Hagrid looked at her from the corner where he was cleaning his boots.

"Yeh bitin' off more'n yeh can chew, Jeanie," he said.

This was obviously an old topic between him and Jeanne, because she didn't even look up. She just said, "Hmm," vaguely, and continued sorting bark.

"Yeh headin' fer a breakdown," continued Hagrid. "Givin' Neville so much tuition...helpin' Madam Pomfrey...an' my classes...an' now helpin' Professor Snape..."

"Don't worry about me, Hagrid," said Jeanne. "I'm not neglecting my gamekeeping duties, am I? You know I always like doing several things at once."

She finished sorting the bark, and placed them in two different jars.

"Besides," she said absently, as if to herself, "the busier you are, the less time you have to think."

Ron still seemed astonished that she was helping Snape.

"I think you're the only one in this school, besides the Slytherins, who likes Snape," he said. "You seem to be talking to him a lot, these days."

Jeanne looked up at this.

"I don't really like Severus," she said slowly. "In fact, I'm a bit afraid of him; he can be rather unnerving at times. If he were nasty to me, I'd probably dislike him as much as any of you."

"What do you two talk about?" asked Harry, curiously. "It can't be Potions all the time."

"He does most of the talking, actually," she said, starting to shred bark again. "Talks about himself, mostly...his ambitions...the state of the world today..." She waved a hand as if to say, "and so on..."

"I just listen," she said. "Severus needs someone to listen to him...he's actually a very lonely and bitter person. Most nasty people are."

Hagrid looked up, boot still in hand.

"Yeh a good girl, Jeanie," he said.

But Jeanne had buried her nose in the book again.

"You and Professor Lupin were dancing pretty close during the Christmas Ball, Jeanne," said Hermione suddenly.

Harry wanted to kick Hermione, but she was sitting too far away.

Jeanne looked up.

"Are you still going on about that, Hermione?" she asked, looking amused. "Professor Lupin and I are just good friends."

Hermione looked sceptical.

"I didn't dance any closer with Remus than I did with Severus," said Jeanne calmly, throwing bark into a jar.

"Besides," she added, smiling at Hermione, "it takes more than one dance for two people to fall in love, you know."

Hermione didn't look convinced.

"That's not true," she muttered to herself, looking at the floor. "All of us here know, that when the conditions are right, it takes less than a minute to cast a spell on someone."

Harry was finding it difficult to sleep. It was a warm night; bright moonlight was spilling in at the window.

He sat up in bed, and found that he was sweating. He walked over to the window, hoping that it might be cooler there, or that even a slight breeze might blow in.

The moon was so bright it was almost like day. He looked down toward the lake, as if expecting to see something there, but everything was still. He stood and gazed out for a few minutes, thinking of nothing in particular. Then, when he was starting to turn and go back to bed, a movement somewhere to his right caught his eye.

He poked his head out of the window, but saw nothing. He waited for a while. Nothing. Harry sighed.

"What's the matter with me?" he muttered. He was starting to turn away from the window when he saw them.

Two wolves, one large and dark, the other smaller and paler, were trotting off in the direction of the Forbidden Forest. They were keeping to the trees, so Harry could only just make them out.

In a flash Harry ran over to his trunk, put on his robes, grabbed his wand and the Invisibility Cloak, and ran silently from the room. He dashed down the stairs, out of the portrait hole, all the way down to the castle entrance.

Once outside, he stopped to catch his breath. The moonlight shone brilliantly down around him. Looking round, he walked toward the grove of trees where he had seen the wolves. But on the way there, something made him turn and look at the castle.

He blinked. The wall of the castle just near him was covered thickly with ivy, but something under the ivy was sticking out ever so slightly. Harry walked quickly over to it and lifted the ivy away.

It was a door, left slightly ajar. Harry's heart skipped a beat. Was it a new secret passageway?

He opened the door and peered in. A flight of stairs led upwards into pitch darkness.

Harry took his wand out, and muttered, "Lumos!" Light flared from the wand. Holding it in front of him, he started up the stairs.

The stairs didn't go up very far. They ended in what seemed to be a trapdoor in the ceiling. Pushing it slowly open, Harry peered cautiously out.

He seemed to be in a room used for stores. Empty boxes lay strewn on the floor, and the dust made him want to sneeze.

Closing the trapdoor, Harry went over to the storeroom door, opened it and looked out. He knew where he was now; a few corridors down, and he would reach the Charms corridor. It would be much faster to return to the dormitory from here, than if he were to go back to the Entrance Hall.

He closed the door and looked around the storeroom. The trapdoor was in one corner of the room. A large, heavy chest, big enough to cover the trapdoor and hide it, stood next to it; it looked as if it had just been shoved aside. The room was bright enough for him to extinguish his wand; moonlight was falling through a window in the wall.

Harry went over to the window to look out. Below, to his right, was the door hidden beneath the ivy. A movement caught his eye. There, in the distance, near the Forbidden Forest, he saw two figures running.

Harry watched them for a while. He knew he had no business to be here; he should go back to bed. However, something about the wolves stirred his imagination. There was something so wild and free about them...

He watched them a while longer, then made up his mind. Leaving the trapdoor open, so that the stairs were dimly illuminated, he made his way down and through the ivy, and started off toward the Forest.

He walked through the grove of trees, then across some fields...The Forest was looming closer and closer to him. He was almost at the edge of it when he heard a noise behind him. He turned, and his stomach gave a lurch.

A large, dark grey wolf was about fifty feet away, its nose to the ground. It seemed to have picked up Harry's trail.

Harry reached into his robes for his wand, but it wasn't there. He must have left it behind in the storeroom! He backed away desperately. It was full moon tonight. What if it was a werewolf? What good was the Invisibility Cloak? The animal could smell him! He then did a very foolish thing indeed; he turned, and ran toward the Forest.

When he had reached the trees, he turned, and his heart almost missed a beat. The wolf was following him.

Harry dashed into the darkness under the trees. His foot caught on a tree root; he fell to the ground, the Cloak falling off him. A loud howl rang in his ears.

Harry scrambled up, his hair all standing on end. There, about twenty feet in front of him, was a werewolf!

It has seen him. It was coming toward him, a mad light shining in its eyes, foam slobbering from its mouth, a low, eager growl in its throat.

Harry stood rooted to the spot, unable to move a muscle.

The werewolf snarled, and bounded forward.

This is the end, he thought. I'm going to die.

Another loud snarling came to his ears from behind him. Turning, Harry saw the dark grey wolf. It was leaping at him - it had leapt past him, straight at the werewolf.

There was a horrible snarling and shrieking as the two animals fought, tearing viciously at each other. Harry stood there, transfixed; and then -

Another wolf sprang at him from the darkness of the trees. It knocked him right to the ground, then stood next to him, growling.

Harry didn't even stop to think. He got up, and holding the Invisibility Cloak over himself, ran for dear life back to the castle, the wolf growling and snapping at his heels all the way. Out of the Forest - across the fields - through the grove of trees - he bounded through the door in the ivy, slammed it shut, thundered up the stairs and through the trapdoor. He then slammed the trapdoor shut and sat on it, breathing hard.

After several minutes, he got up and went to the window.

The wolf was sitting on the ground in front of the ivy, watching the door. It looked up at Harry when he appeared at the window, its tongue lolling out in a smile. Harry had the impression the wolf was laughing at him.

The wolf looked at him for a few moments, then turned, and without a backward glance, made its way back toward the Forest.

Harry watched it until it disappeared from sight. He suddenly felt very tired. He took his wand from the window sill, where he had accidentally left it, and tucked it back into his robes. Turning from the window, he walked slowly back to his dormitory.

Still shaking slightly from fright, his body aching with tiredness, he undressed and got into bed. However, it was a long time before he fell asleep.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Harry woke up the next morning still feeling tired. He couldn't concentrate on lessons at all that day; he was in a stupor all throughout History of Magic, and later during Potions he hardly even heard Snape's sarcastic comments when his solution turned bright purple instead of blue.

"What's up, Harry?" asked Ron, looking worried. "You've been looking half asleep all morning."

"I'm all right," Harry muttered. "Just couldn't sleep last night."

He tried to study that afternoon in the Gryffindor common room, but his thoughts kept wandering.

"Just go and get it over with," he said to himself.

He looked at Ron and Hermione. Hermione was correcting Ron's history essay, and Ron was arguing with her.

Harry left them arguing and went out of the portrait hole. He made straight for Jeanne's room, but wasn't surprised when no one answered the door. He stood for a

while outside the room, then made up his mind, and started off toward Professor Lupin's room.

Once he was standing outside the room, though, he suddenly changed his mind. Perhaps this wasn't a good time to come. He reached out a hand to knock on the door, then drew it back. After a moment's hesitation, he turned, and slowly made his way back down the corridor.

He was saved by Madam Pomfrey, who was coming from the opposite direction carrying a box. She looked like she was in a hurry.

"Ah, Harry," she said, looking pleased to see him. "Could you give this to Jeanne? She's in Professor Lupin's room. I have to rush off somewhere."

She gave him a warm smile, and then turned and rapidly disappeared down the corridor.

Harry looked in the box. There was an empty goblet there, together with what looked like a lot of herbs. He started off back toward Lupin's room.

Jeanne opened the door when he knocked. She looked surprised to see him.

"Madam Pomfrey asked me to give this to you," he said quickly.

She took the box from him, then stood there, looking at him.

"Jeanne," said Harry hurriedly, "About last night -"

"Hush," she said, holding a finger to her lips.

She glanced quickly back into the room, then turned to face him again.

"Come to my room tomorrow night," she whispered, leaning forward slightly. "I'll talk to you then." And then she turned and shut the door.

Harry felt slightly nervous as he made his way to Jeanne's room the following evening. She opened the door at once when he knocked, and invited him in.

He hadn't really seen the inside of Jeanne's room before. On the night of the Christmas Ball, he had been much too interested in watching Professors McGonagall

and Lupin dressing Jeanne up to notice anything else. He now looked around. The room didn't look like the rest of the castle. Instead of stone, the walls and flooring consisted of pine strips. One entire wall had been replaced by floor to ceiling windows, so that, although the room was small, it did not feel enclosed. Jeanne had obviously tried to make the room feel as little like Deorg's cave as possible.

She smiled. "Do you like my room?"

Harry was almost too surprised to speak.

"Yes," he said, and looked at the floor to ceiling windows. "But how come -"

"It doesn't show on the outside of the castle?" She smiled. "I got Professor Flitwick to charm it for me."

She walked over to an old sofa, beckoning to him to follow.

"Please sit down. What would you like to drink? Tea? Coffee? Pumpkin juice?"

"Er - pumpkin juice," said Harry, thinking of the warm weather.

"Wake up, Drink Jug," she said, gently patting a round jug that had been snoring on the table. It woke up with a snort.

"Two pumpkin juices," she said. It shook itself awake, then jumped up and poured juice into two small glasses. Then, with a small belch, it promptly went back to sleep.

Harry looked at it in astonishment. Jeanne smiled.

"That was Neville's Christmas present," she said.

She gave him one glass, then, taking the other, sat back on the sofa, looking at him.

Harry took the glass, and sat holding it nervously, looking back at her.

"How is Professor Lupin?" he asked.

"Better," she said. "Full moon's over."

She looked at him.

"He's very angry with you, you know."

Harry groaned inwardly.

"I'm sorry," he said. "He...he wasn't hurt, was he?"

"A little," she said, looking soberly at him. "But Madam Pomfrey put it right."

Harry felt guilty.

"I won't do it again," he said quietly.

She shifted her position on the sofa, still looking at him. Was he imagining it, or were her eyes twinkling?

"I believe you," she said.

She took a sip from her glass, and Harry drank some as well.

He looked at her.

"So - it's true," he said.

She lowered her glass, and looked directly at him. "What is true?"

"That you - and Professor Lupin are - are -"

She looked at him soberly, and there was an unhappy look in her eyes.

"No, Harry," she said gently. "Like I said before, Remus and I are just friends."

For some reason, Harry just couldn't believe her. He had been so sure.

"Don't you care for him?" he blurted out.

She was quiet a while, as if pondering whether to answer. Then she seemed to make up her mind.

"Between you and me, well - yes, I do care for him," she admitted quietly.

"Then why - ?" said Harry.

She looked at him sadly. "Isn't it obvious?"

Harry stared at her.

"What? Because he's a werewolf? But - that's not fair! He's human too - he's -"

Jeanne put up a hand to silence him. She looked slightly distressed.

"Don't misunderstand me, Harry. I have no problem with him being a werewolf whatsoever. It's Remus who doesn't want the relationship to develop."

Harry couldn't believe her. He looked at the pendant at her throat, which he was certain Lupin had given her for Christmas.

"But - why?"

Jeanne gave a small sigh.

"He's afraid of hurting me," she said. "Even though I said we could be careful, there's the Wolfsbane potion, and besides, I can transform fast enough before anything can happen...he wouldn't agree. He said, we just need to be careless one time - just once, and that would be it."

She paused for a moment, looking out of the window.

"Actually, I knew from the beginning he would think this way," she said. "I had an answer to his every objection, but it still was no use."

"Every objection?" said Harry.

"Remus said I had no idea what life with a werewolf would be like," said Jeanne. "He felt he couldn't support me, or give me a good life - it has already been so difficult for him to find paid work. And he said it didn't matter whether I was a werewolf myself or not, so long as I'm with him, I'll be shunned by society - like an outcast."

She gave a rather bitter smile, and held up a hand to Harry. It was covered with bright red blood.

"As if I'm not already outcast," she said. "As if I care anything about society!"

She lowered her hand, and the red colour swiftly faded.

"Then, there was the question of children," she continued.

She stared at her glass.

"Just because he's a werewolf doesn't mean his children will be, you know," she said. "But he said, he couldn't do such a thing to them - letting them have a werewolf for a father. He was afraid of harming them, just as he was afraid of harming me."

She sighed. "I had an answer to that as well," she said, looking at Harry.

"What was it?" asked Harry, listening intently.

Jeanne hesitated before answering.

"I can't ever have children, Harry," she said at last. "Madam Pomfrey checked me when I came here. Some of the treatment I received from Deorg while I was in the cave damaged my womb so badly that I can never conceive a child."

Harry didn't know what to say.

"I-I'm sorry," he said.

Jeanne shrugged.

"In this case, it doesn't matter very much," she said. "That didn't convince Remus either. We had a very long talk that night, after the Christmas Ball. We talked everything out. He was angry with himself; said, he shouldn't have been so weak, to allow things to develop this far."

"But," said Harry, "You're still together. The two wolves..."

Jeanne took another sip from her glass, and looked absently out of the window.

"I knew from the beginning I wouldn't be able to convince him, anyway. I know him so well. So I said, why don't we just continue as we have been - as good friends. I'll still come and see him during full moon, or drop by to talk sometimes, as I used to."

"Just friends?" said Harry. "But - is it possible?"

Jeanne was looking at her glass of pumpkin juice, but Harry felt she was seeing something else.

"I'll make it possible, Harry," she said. "Remus means too much to me for me to give him up. I'll have him as a friend if nothing else. Besides..." her voice trailed away, and her gaze drifted to the window.

"I don't expect very much from life," she said. "After the hell I went through in Kamchatka, I'm just thankful I'm out of there and here in Hogwarts at all. I don't expect to be happy in life. I don't expect everything to go the way I want. Remus may not always teach here; I may not always be here either - if Deorg comes in search of me. If I can just have one or two years here, with him, as a good friend, I think I won't ask for more."

Harry was silent for a while, trying to absorb everything she was saying. Something she had said earlier kept coming to his mind.

"Jeanne," he said, "there's something I don't understand. That time - during Hagrid's class - when you were talking to Malfoy, you said Professor Lupin was an old friend...but how can that be? You'd only known him for a month!"

Jeanne gave a rather wistful smile.

"You're wrong, Harry," she said. "I've known him longer than that. I've known him ever since Deorg captured me and put me in that cave."

Harry didn't understand at all. He looked at her, confused.

"The first few weeks with Deorg were a nightmare for me," she said. "I tried to kill myself, but he put a spell on me so that I couldn't. I was going insane. I would have gone insane, if I hadn't discovered the mirror."

She looked at Harry.

"The first time the mirror spoke to me, it said it could do one thing for me," she continued. "It said it would give me a companion of my choice. I wouldn't be able to talk to him, but the mirror could show me all that was happening to him, so that at least I wouldn't be alone."

She paused, and looked down at the glass in her hands.

"I didn't know who to choose," she said. "I didn't want to choose my foster parents - because seeing them would just remind me they were dead. And I had no close friends. So I asked the mirror to make the choice, for me."

"I see," said Harry, slowly.

"The mirror then showed me a small boy," Jeanne went on. "He was screaming - he had just been bitten by a werewolf. His parents got him away in time, but had to lock him up when he transformed."

She turned to look at Harry.

"That's right, Harry," she said, seeing his expression. "It was Professor Lupin. The mirror chose him to be my companion."

Harry was too astonished to say anything.

"Remus was my only friend throughout those years of hell," said Jeanne. "I couldn't talk to him, but the mirror showed me many events of his life - his schooldays, his friends - with your father, James, and Sirius Black; and most of all, how much he suffered each time he transformed."

Her voice was shaking slightly, and she steadied it.

"I saw what happened after he graduated from school, how difficult it was for him to find work, all the discouragement." She bit her lip. "I guess I'd already fallen in love with him, back then. I didn't care, because I was so desperate. I didn't know whether he really existed, or whether he was just something the mirror had created. I never thought I'd really meet him."

She gave a small sigh, and fell silent.

"So that was why - that night, when we got you away from Deorg - you transformed back on your own," said Harry slowly.

Jeanne nodded. "Even in the state I was in, I think I somehow recognised him."

"And that's why - that time in the Three Broomsticks - you knew Sirius Black was innocent."

Jeanne shook her head.

"I didn't know at the time," she said. "The mirror hadn't shown me what happened in your third year. Remus only told me about it afterward. I was just angry with those officials at the time - they were so self-righteous and full of themselves. Besides, I liked Sirius - he was hot-tempered and volatile in school, but I liked him."

Harry was still thinking.

"And you must have known Snape already, as well, before you met him."

Jeanne looked rather tired now, but she gave Harry a small smile.

"Yes, I already knew Severus, and Albus Dumbledore," she said.

Harry looked at Jeanne.

"Professor Lupin - does he know about the mirror?"

She nodded. "I told him that night, after the Christmas Ball. I was afraid he would mind, it's as if I've been spying on him. But he didn't; he just said it was unhealthy for me to have known only one man, and that I should go out and meet more people, I might find someone I like better - " She broke off, looking slightly exasperated.

Harry was still thinking.

"I wonder why the mirror chose him," he said.

"I wondered that, too," said Jeanne. "Perhaps it was because we were similar - both of us trapped in bodies over which we had no control."

But Harry was thinking of something else. Grenivere had said Lupin's grandfather knew how to craft Starlight jewellery...and so did Jeanne's elderly jeweller friend. Was there a connection? He thought of the mirror in the cave...its frame...

"Jeanne," he said, "have you any idea where the mirror came from?"

She shook her head. "Like I told you, Harry, it was already there before I came."

"That elderly gentleman you knew as a child," said Harry, "did he make only jewellery?"

Jeanne was looking at the time, and only half-listening.

"The gentleman - what? Oh, well, it was a long time ago, I don't really remember," she said. She smiled at him.

"It's late, Harry. You'd better be getting off to bed."

She saw him to the door.

"Remus will want to talk to you tomorrow."

"Is he really angry with me?" asked Harry, feeling slightly apprehensive.

She smiled, and gave his arm an affectionate squeeze.

"If he is, it's because he's concerned about you," she said. "Good-night."

"Good night," he answered automatically, and then walked back to the common room, still thinking about everything he'd just heard.

Harry found himself, for the first time that year, not really looking forward to the next Defence Against the Dark Arts class. However, the next day Professor Lupin appeared to be his usual cheerful self, although he still looked rather tired and ill. They had an interesting lesson, and Harry began to hope that Lupin had forgotten about the incident in the Forbidden Forest.

Once the class ended, though, Lupin didn't start packing his books away, as he usually did. He merely stood by his desk, leaning slightly on it with arms folded, looking at Harry.

Harry's heart sank. Excuses ran through his mind. How could he explain why he'd been in the Forest? He didn't want to lie to Lupin. He thought of the two wolves, wild and free...

"You all go ahead," he said to Ron and Hermione, "I need to ask Lupin something."

When all the students had left, Harry gathered his own books, and slowly walked up to Lupin's desk.

Lupin didn't say anything. Harry, looking up cautiously, saw that he was looking seriously at him.

"Well, Harry?" said Lupin, at last.

Harry looked at the desk.

"I know I was wrong," he said. "I don't know what got into me that night...it was the moonlight...I'm sorry..."

Lupin was silent. He waited until Harry looked up at him again, before speaking.

"You know, of course, if we hadn't been there, you would be dead by now."

Harry nodded glumly.

Lupin looked stern.

"You know I should punish you, Harry; but unfortunately, this time I am not in a position to do so."

Harry looked at him in surprise.

Lupin gave a rather wry smile.

"...because I wasn't supposed to be there, either. No one has ever said anything, of course, but I believe there is an unspoken agreement that I should remain in my office when I transform."

Harry thought he saw a scar on Lupin's neck, but he couldn't be sure. He suddenly felt very guilty.

"I promise I won't do it again," he said, quietly.

Lupin gave a small sigh.

"Very well, Harry," he said. "I will hold you to your promise. You may go."

Harry went slowly to the door. He opened it, but then turned around.

"Professor Lupin?" he said.

Lupin had started to pack away his books. He stopped, and looked at Harry.

"Thank you - for saving my life," said Harry, his eyes on the floor.

Lupin looked surprised.

"Not at all, Harry," he said, more kindly. "I would do it again, if I had to. Now get along to your next class."

This made Harry feel worse.

"I really won't do it again."

"I'm sure you won't, Harry," said Lupin.

Harry looked up. Lupin's eyes were twinkling.

"Jeanne says she never saw anyone run so fast," said Lupin. "She thinks you must have broken the long distance record. She said to tell you, she never intended to hurt you, just teach you a lesson."

He smiled, and continued packing his things away.

Harry suddenly felt rather foolish.

Lupin no longer took any notice of him, but continued packing his books away, so Harry turned and started off toward his next class, still feeling foolish.

Exams were here. The students were all gathered in the Gryffindor common room, studying. Neville was sitting in a corner, his notes scattered all about him, studying his Potions textbook with an almost desperate look on his face.

Harry, who was sitting nearby with Ron and Hermione, looked at him.

"Why are you so uptight, Neville?" he asked. "You've been getting along all right in Potions lately, even though Snape doesn't seem to think so."

It was true. Neville had been making fewer mistakes of late, and more of his potions had been turning out the way they were supposed to, but Professor Snape was being nastier than ever to him, picking on the slightest mistake.

Neville turned slightly pale at the mention of Snape.

"I can't help worrying," he said. "I'm afraid something will go wrong. I can't let Jeanne down, she's been working so hard to help me."

"I'm sure you'll do fine, Neville," said Hermione, comfortingly. "Just keep your head, and be careful."

The day of the Potions exam arrived. They were each given a bunch of white roses, and were supposed to produce a potion that would change the roses to a wine red colour.

Neville worked feverishly on his solution, trembling whenever Snape came up to check on him. By the end of the period, his solution was pale green, as it was supposed to be. Snape scowled.

Neville tested some of the solution on one rose petal. It turned red at once. He was so jubilant that he jumped up, and dropped his spatula on the floor.

Harry, busily stirring in the last of his ingredients, didn't look up, but could hear Neville under the table, looking for the spatula.

There was suddenly a horrible gulping and belching sound from Neville's cauldron. Harry looked up, and saw Draco Malfoy sliding back into his seat. Malfoy's extra shrivelfigs, which Harry was sure he had seen on the table a few minutes ago, had disappeared.

Neville's cauldron was bubbling over, and the solution had turned a horrible purplish-black colour. Neville, emerging from beneath the table, gave a squeak of horror when he saw it, and then burst into tears.

Snape came over. "What's all the commotion here?"

"It was Malfoy!" shouted Harry angrily. "He threw his extra shrivelfigs into Neville's cauldron!"

"Prove it, Potter," drawled Malfoy. He was Snape's pet, and Snape would usually let him get away with anything.

"Where are your extra shrivelfigs, then?" demanded Seamus. "We were each allowed to take four. We only had to use two."

"I only took two from the supply pile in front," said Malfoy coolly.

Snape's eyes glittered.

"Five points from Gryffindor, Potter, for making unjustified accusations," he said.

Harry was furious.

"He took more than two shrivelfigs!" he said. "I saw them on his table!"

"Sir, it's true," said Hermione. "And we know we shouldn't put extra shrivelfigs in. The exam paper has a cautionary statement warning us not to."

"I did not notice Mr Malfoy taking more than two shrivelfigs," said Snape coldly. "I find it more likely that Longbottom has made one of his usual careless mistakes."

"But his potion was green! You saw it!" said Harry. "And he tested it on one petal!"

But the purplish-black solution had bubbled over onto the table, and the petal had dissolved in it.

"There is no time to repeat the experiment," said Snape, looking at his watch. "Longbottom, I will have to fail you."

Poor Neville just sat at his seat, sobbing heartbrokenly.

Neville spent the rest of the day sitting in a corner of the Gryffindor common room, staring at the wall. He refused to eat. The others tried to console him, but he refused to be comforted.

"I've let Jeanne down," he kept saying. "I can't face her. I don't know what to say to her."

Later that evening, a scops owl flew into the room. It flew straight over to Neville.

"It's a letter for you, Neville," said Harry.

Neville was still staring at the wall. "I don't want to read it."

Harry had a feeling he knew who had sent the letter. He opened it.

"It's from Jeanne," he said. "She wants to see you."

"I don't want to see her," said Neville. "I can't face her."

The scops owl was sitting on the floor next to him. It looked at him for a moment, and then it was gone; Jeanne was standing there instead.

"Neville," she said, looking at him.

Neville burst into tears again.

Jeanne looked rather stricken. She took Neville's hand, and gently led him out of the common room.

Neville didn't come back that night, but he appeared at breakfast the next morning looking much better.

"I'm all right now," he said. "Jeanne and I had a long talk last night. She said she spoke to Snape, and that he admitted he saw me testing the rose petal. So I'll get some marks, after all."

"That's great, Neville," said Harry.

Neville sighed.

"I really wanted to do well, though," he said, mournfully.

Hermione patted his shoulder.

"I'm sure you will, next year," she said.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

Another new school year in Hogwarts has begun. Harry has taken the usual train from platform nine and three-quarters, and has arrived at the castle together with Ron and Hermione...

They were all gathered in the Great Hall for the start of term feast.

"Look, Harry," said Hermione, "Look who's at the staff table - it's Jeanne!"

Harry turned to look. Jeanne, in her usual green and brown outfit, was sitting between Hagrid and Professor Flitwick.

"We've got some new teachers, too," observed Ron.

At this moment, Professor Dumbledore stood up to speak.

"Welcome to another new school year," he said, beaming at everyone, his half-moon spectacles glinting. "Before we begin our feast, I have the pleasure of introducing two new members of staff to you.

"Firstly, we have Professor Marcus Flynn, who is here to conduct some research on Potions jointly with Professor Snape."

The students clapped politely. Professor Flynn stood up and bowed. He was tall and good-looking, but he had a rather innocent and childlike expression on his face.

Ron looked startled.

"Did he say Marcus Flint?" he asked. Marcus Flint had been the much-disliked (at least by the Gryffindors) Quidditch captain of the Slytherin team.

"It's Flynn, not Flint," said Hermione, clapping enthusiastically. "He's quite handsome, isn't he?"

Ron looked at him.

"Doesn't look very bright," he commented.

"And secondly," continued Professor Dumbledore, "we have Professor Venilda Maricai. She is temporarily here to replace Professor Trelawney, who is away on Sabbatical Leave."

Professor Maricai had large, green eyes, and her golden curls were twisted fashionably at the back of her head. She looked very glamorous, and looked as if she knew it. Harry privately thought she looked rather vain. Ron, however, looked as if he was pleased he hadn't dropped Divination.

After the feast, Harry went up to talk to Jeanne.

"You've grown taller, Harry," she said, looking pleased to see him. She put a hand on his shoulder, and kissed him affectionately on the cheek.

Harry was startled, but secretly rather pleased.

"I'm surprised you're here," he said.

She smiled.

"Hagrid dragged me here. I guess I can't always run away...and anyway, I'm not as frightened of crowds as I used to be."

Harry looked around.

"Where's Professor Lupin?" he asked.

"Over there," she said, smiling and pointing.

Lupin was leaving the Hall. Professor Maricai was with him, talking animatedly. For some reason, the sight of them together displeased Harry.

He turned to look at Jeanne, but she didn't seem to mind.

"Hagrid's leaving," she said. "I've got to go, too. See you all sometime for tea, as usual?"

Harry nodded, and she smiled, and left.

Friday afternoon found Harry on his way to Hagrid's cabin alone. Hermione was in the library, and Ron had gone to see Professor McGonagall about something.

He was halfway there when he heard footsteps behind him. Turning around, he saw that it was Professor Flynn. He smiled when he saw Harry.

"Good afternoon," he said, turning his childlike gaze on Harry. "You're Harry Potter, aren't you?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Just taking a look around the school," said Flynn, looking around him. "Do you mind if I walk with you?"

"I'm going to Hagrid's cabin," explained Harry.

"Wonderful!" said Flynn, smiling, "I'll go with you!"

Harry wasn't too pleased. For some reason, he found Professor Flynn rather irritating.

It was a stormy day. Dark clouds were gathering, and the wind was blowing strongly. When they reached Hagrid's, Harry saw Jeanne outside at one of the enclosures. It was mating season for the Hippogriffs, and two males were sparring with each other while a female looked on. Jeanne was obviously trying to separate the two.

Professor Flynn's childlike face lit up when he saw her.

"Who's that?" he asked, excitedly.

"That's Jeanne," said Harry, surprised. "Hagrid's assistant. She was at your table, at the start of term feast."

Flynn was still watching. Jeanne was shouting at the Hippogriffs; her hair had come down, and was floating behind her in the wind like a silky black banner. She suddenly mounted one of the Hippogriffs, and it took flight. At this moment, the clouds broke slightly and a shaft of sunlight shone down on her, producing a very dramatic effect.

Professor Flynn couldn't seem to take his eyes off her.

"What a beautiful girl!" he said, looking spellbound.

Jeanne flew the Hippogriff to the end of the pen, and tied it up.

"Harry, will you introduce me to her?" asked Flynn.

"But you must have met her," protested Harry. "She was at your table - "

They had reached the pen. Jeanne saw them and came over, tying her hair up again. She was wearing her usual rather sullen expression.

"Jeanne, this is Professor Marcus Flynn," said Harry, feeling slightly awkward. "He wants to meet you. Professor Flynn, Jeanne Graham."

Professor Flynn didn't seem surprised to hear that Jeanne, though Chinese, had an English surname.

"But we've met," said Jeanne, surprised and not looking too thrilled. "I met you at the start of term feast."

"Have we?" said Flynn in his childlike way. "It must have been too confusing that night...so many new faces..."

She shook hands with him, then turned to Harry.

"I can't stay, Harry," she said. "I need to see Madam Pomfrey about something."

"I'll walk back to the castle with you!" said Flynn, enthusiastically.

"I beg your pardon, but I'm in a bit of a hurry," she said, giving him a polite smile. "Please excuse me." And she transformed into a hawk, and flew off toward the castle.

"What an amazing girl!" said Flynn, watching in an awestruck manner. He did not seem interested in staying with Harry, now that Jeanne had gone, and to Harry's relief he set off back to the castle.

"Looks like Jeanne has a new admirer," said Harry to himself.

Professor Flynn proved to be a persistent admirer. He began to come down to Hagrid's quite often, hoping to meet Jeanne. When Neville came over to Hagrid's to

discuss his homework with Jeanne, he would hang around and try to contribute his own views. He would also enthusiastically join in the discussion whenever Jeanne went to talk to Professor Snape about potions.

Jeanne put up with it at first, but after a while she began to lose patience.

"I'm quite busy today, Marcus," she said crossly one day, when he had come round again. "Please don't bother me."

Flynn, however, didn't seem put off whenever she got cross. He was as persistent as ever. Ron and Hagrid found the entire situation very funny.

"Professor Flynn's coming, Jeanne," Ron would say, looking out of the window. At first this had the effect of sending Jeanne running out the back door, but after a while she realised they were only pulling her leg. In the end, she stationed some of her bird friends on the roof of the hut to warn her if Flynn was coming. She would then transform herself into a bird and fly out the window, and perch on the roof until he left.

"Why don' yeh like Professor Flynn, Jeanie?" asked Hagrid one day. "Yeh get annoy'd when we tease yeh with him. Yeh never used ter get cross even when we teased yeh with Professor Snape, an' Flynn's much better-lookin' than him."

"Severus doesn't keep hanging around the way Marcus does," said Jeanne, looking up from a shirt of Hagrid's that she was mending. "And at least Severus can contribute something intelligent to the conversation. Marcus is incapable of uttering anything remotely interesting."

"But he's a Professor!" pointed out Hermione.

Jeanne smiled, then gave a small shrug.

"He's supposed to be doing research with Severus," she said, "but Severus seems to be doing most of the work."

"I'm not surprised," said Harry. "Flynn doesn't have time to do any work. He's always hanging around trying to get near you."

Jeanne frowned.

"I'm asking Neville to come to my room for tuition, from now on," she said.

"Neville doesn't mind Professor Flynn," said Ron. "He sometimes takes over our Potions classes, so that Snape can do his research, and he's a vast improvement on Snape."

"He's a playboy, though," said Harry. "We see photos of him every week in Witches' Weekly. He's always attending some ball or party during the weekend, and he seems loaded with money."

Jeanne looked rather disapproving.

"You shouldn't read tabloids like Witches' Weekly, Harry," she said reprovingly. "It's trash."

"I don't," said Harry. "Parvati Patil and Lavendar Brown are the ones who buy it. I just happened to see Flynn inside."

"Only bad thing I can see 'bout Professor Flynn is that he likes huntin'," said Hagrid. "Flyin'-Fox huntin' an' all that. I tol' him no huntin's allow'd in Hogwarts here, though, if he wants ter, he has ter do it elsewhere."

Jeanne looked even more disapproving.

"Barbarian!" she muttered, turning back to the shirt. She ran the tip of Hagrid's pink umbrella over a rip in the sleeve, and it closed up, like, well, magic.

Jeanne was not the only one with a new admirer. To Harry and the others' astonishment, Professor Maricai appeared to have attached herself to Professor Lupin. She was not as obvious as Professor Flynn was with Jeanne, but Harry and the others noticed that she would always try to sit next to Lupin during meals, and she didn't have Professor Trelawney's preference for staying closeted up in her room. She would often be seen somewhere near Lupin's office, or waiting outside his classroom to ask him something when the class ended.

"It doesn't make sense," said Hermione, looking puzzled, after dinner one day. "I don't think she's really the type Professor Lupin would go for."

"I don't think Lupin likes her," said Harry. "He's his usual polite self with her, but that's all. She's the one after him."

"I wonder whether she knows he's a werewolf," said Hermione, thoughtfully.

"I didn't think he'd be the type she'd go after, either," pointed out Ron. "She's more Flynn's type."

"Flynn's too busy chasing Jeanne," said Harry. "And that only leaves Lupin. No one in their right mind would go after Snape, and I don't think she'd go for Flitwick."

"Things are pretty interesting this term, aren't they?" said Hermione. "Last year it was only Professor Lupin and Jeanne."

Harry said nothing. Although he knew Jeanne and Lupin were officially only friends, he somehow found the thought of either of them being with anyone else very offensive.

"Lupin will never go after Professor Maricai, anyway," he said to himself. "For the same reason he's refused to be with Jeanne."

Professor Lupin, however, showed no sign of being interested in Professor Maricai. If anything, Harry couldn't help noticing that Lupin and Jeanne seemed closer than ever. They were still discreet about their relationship, so that most of the school appeared to be unaware of it, but Harry, who knew about them, sometimes felt that each seemed to know what the other was thinking without saying anything.

Jeanne sometimes came for meals at the Hall now, but she hardly ever sat with Lupin. She usually sat with Hagrid, or Professor Flitwick, or even Snape. Harry sometimes saw her and Lupin exchange a look from opposite ends of the table. Sometimes they would just smile quietly at each other, as if at some private joke. Once, Harry saw Lupin looking at Jeanne as if asking her a question; she gazed back, as if listening, then gave a small shake of the head in reply.

Jeanne didn't even seem to mind the attention Professor Maricai was paying to Lupin. She would watch in amusement while he patiently listened to one of Professor Maricai's long and involved stories, and give him a mischievous smile if she caught his eye.

Harry couldn't quite understand, himself, why he felt concerned about their relationship working out. Perhaps because Jeanne had confided in him about it. Lupin had been one of his father's close friends, and Harry liked Jeanne. He knew her habitual sullen expression was partly the result of the misery she'd endured in Kamchatka. The sullen expression usually vanished into a smile, though, when she saw Harry. She had always seemed especially fond of him. She was giving Neville

tuition, but she would also sometimes quietly ask Harry how his schoolwork was progressing, and Hagrid would occasionally let slip that she had been worrying about him behind his back.

Because of all this, Harry somehow found himself checking the Marauder's Map every full moon, without telling anyone, to make sure Jeanne was still helping Madam Pomfrey look after Lupin. He was pleased to note that they were also still roaming around the grounds at night, during that time, as wolves.

He had noticed some irregularities in the Map's behaviour, though. On one occasion, he had brought it out because he wanted to ask Jeanne something, and he wanted to check if she was in her room or down at Hagrid's. To his surprise, she was in Lupin's room.

"She must have dropped by to talk," he thought. "It isn't full moon at the moment."

Then he blinked. The two small dots in Lupin's room had disappeared.

"Where have they gone?" he wondered. Could they have Apparated out of the castle?

"But no one can Apparate from the castle," thought Harry. He carefully searched through the whole Map, but they were nowhere to be found.

He checked the Map more often after that. He began to notice that Jeanne sometimes didn't appear to be on the school premises at all, usually at night. He thought that she might have transformed into a bird, and flown out of the grounds for a breath of air; but the Map would then show that she was still absent, even four or five hours later.

"It's not possible; the Map must be faulty," Harry decided. "Lupin and the others must have made a mistake while writing it."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Nothing much happens in the first half of the school year, so we now jump to the end of March.

Harry might find Professor Flynn irritating, but he definitely preferred it when Flynn took over the Potions classes from Snape. It was a relief for Neville too, for whom the memory of his disastrous Potions exam the previous year was still fresh.

Neville seemed to have lost all confidence in himself when it came to Potions. Snape was being as nasty to him as ever, and Neville even went to pieces when Professor Flynn conducted the class, although Flynn was very kind to him, probably because he knew Jeanne was tutoring him.

On one occasion, the students were supposed to prepare a solution which was used to turn gemstones greener.

"Used in the jewellery business," said Professor Flynn, giving them his childlike stare. "Improves emeralds of poor quality, and deepens the green in jade."

Neville, his face screwed up in concentration, started work on his potion. Harry, sitting at the next table, noticed Trevor, Neville's pet toad, watching Neville with a rather bored look on his toady face.

Flynn came over to Neville several times to encourage him. Everything seemed to be going swimmingly, when all of a sudden, Pansy Parkinson, one of the Slytherins, let out a shrill scream.

Trevor had become tired of watching Neville, and had wandered off to watch some of the other students. He had come over to watch Harry for a while, then hopped over to the Slytherins' side. Here he suddenly felt sleepy, so he made himself comfortable on a pile of Pansy's luminous fungi - one of the potion's ingredients - and went to sleep. Pansy, intent on her solution, didn't notice him till she put out a hand to grab some fungi and caught hold of Trevor instead. She screamed.

Trevor gave an indignant croak and leapt up in the air - to drop right into Pansy's cauldron, which fortunately had cooled down. Solution splattered all over the place, onto Pansy, who continued shrieking, and Draco Malfoy, who was sitting next to her.

Pansy grabbed her wand and whacked it at Trevor. Trevor, now a bright grass green, hopped desperately off the table back to Neville, who jumped up in excitement, and accidentally dropped a lump of sulphur into both his fire and his cauldron.

Flames sprang up, and the solution, bubbling furiously, shot out in a fountain toward the ceiling, raining onto the surrounding tables and students.

Pandemonium reigned. The girls all screamed, and everyone started scrambling for cover. Harry, peering out from under his table, saw that Neville's solution was turning everything blue, not green. Trevor, now an electric blue instead of green, came hopping over to take refuge under Ron's cauldron, which was lying overturned on the floor.

Professor Flynn, his face a bright blue colour due to the solution, shouted for calm and started searching around the floor for his wand, which Goyle had knocked out of his hand while running past for cover.

In the midst of all the confusion, the door opened and Professor Snape came in with something in his hand. The class, seeing him, suddenly fell silent.

Snape ignored the chaos in the class, and looked at Flynn with a strange glitter in his eyes.

"Donahue is dead," he said.

Flynn's face went a paler shade of blue.

"No!" he gasped. "You're joking!"

Snape said nothing, but merely held out a scrap of parchment.

Flynn read it, then looked at Snape.

"Murdered?" he said, almost in a whisper. "But - who would want to murder him?"

Snape's lip curled.

"That is not our problem, Flynn. Our problem is whether there is any point continuing with the research now."

Flynn seemed to be thinking, and then an expression of mulish determination came over his childlike face.

"We must continue, Severus!" he said. "How can we let our colleague down? We will find a way!"

Snape was wearing his usual sneering expression.

"It's up to you, Flynn," he said coldly. "It is of very little consequence to me whether the experiment is successful or not."

"How can you say that, Severus?" said Flynn, looking rather shocked.

Snape, however, was already leaving the room. He paused at the door, then turned around and snapped,

"We will be having a meeting immediately. The Headmaster wishes to see us."

Flynn, his mouth slightly open, watched as Snape disappeared through the door. Then, he suddenly turned to the students and said, "Class dismissed! Excuse me, I have an urgent meeting." And he hurried through the door after Snape.

Ron, fishing Trevor - now a mixture of electric blue and grass green - out of his cauldron, turned to Harry.

"What on earth was all that about?" he asked.

Harry couldn't sleep. He lay, wide awake, staring up at the canopy of his bed. Then, he got up and took out the album of his parents' photographs and looked through it. When he had finished, he placed it back in his trunk. He then caught sight of the bottle of stardust which Jeanne had obtained from the mirror in Deorg's fortress for him.

He took the bottle out, and idly turned it around in his hands for a while, watching the dust shimmer. Would it one day bring his parents back?

He put the bottle back in the trunk, then saw his Invisibility Cloak. He hadn't used it for a while.

Harry stared at the Cloak for a minute or two, then made up his mind. He would just walk around the castle a bit, until he felt a bit more sleepy. Taking up the Cloak, he went from the room.

He wandered down to the Great Hall, then over to the Charms corridor. At one point he saw Mrs Norris coming up a flight of stairs, and stopped until she passed.

"Just one more round, and then I'll go back to bed," he said to himself.

The route he was taking would lead him past Professor Lupin's room. He was just passing by when the door opened, and Jeanne came out. Harry stopped short in surprise. He pulled the Invisibility Cloak more tightly around him and looked at her. Why was she with Lupin at this hour of the night?

Lupin was at the door, looking at her. For a while, they faced each other, and something seemed to pass between them, though they did not say anything. Harry could tell by their faces that something was wrong.

At last, Jeanne said softly, "Are you sure, Remus?"

Lupin's gaze fell to the floor.

"Forgive me, Jeanne," he said, quietly.

She looked at him for a moment more, then turned and made her way down the corridor. Harry could clearly see tears rolling down her cheeks as she passed him.

Lupin stood at the doorway as if turned to stone, watching her with an obscure kind of pain in his eyes. Then, when she had gone, he slowly turned around and shut the door.

Harry stood there, petrified. What had happened?

He headed slowly back to the Gryffindor common room, and up to bed, still thinking.

The only thing he could think of, that could explain what he'd just seen, was that Lupin had decided he liked Professor Maricai after all, and had dumped Jeanne. But this seemed so impossible that Harry dismissed it. He lay in bed for a while, and fell asleep still wondering about it.

Jeanne seemed very subdued over the next few days. She was wearing her sullen expression even more than ever. Hagrid was worried about her.

"She's almos' like she was when she firs' came here," he told Harry. "Not talkin' ter anyone."

Harry, however, didn't tell Hagrid what he'd seen. He knew neither Jeanne nor Lupin would care for anyone to know.

Professor Lupin was also looking rather sober. He even looked rather irritated by Professor Maricai's constant attention at times, which was unusual for him. Harry couldn't help feeling pleased when he noticed this.

"That rules out one reason, anyway," he said to himself.

During the next full moon, just a few days later, he checked the Marauder's Map. Jeanne was in Lupin's room during the day, but at night she was back in her own room. Harry felt his heart sink when he saw this.

He thought of trying to talk to her, but she seemed to be avoiding him.

He finally had his chance a few days later, when he happened to meet her one afternoon down at Hagrid's. She was sitting on the floor, reading a thick book. In front of her was an array of small jars full of unsightly solutions. They reminded Harry of the jars he had seen in Snape's study.

"Hagrid's gone to London on an errand for Dumbledore," she said when she saw Harry. "He won't be back till tonight."

Harry sat down next to her, but before he could say anything, there was a knock on the door, and Neville came in. He was holding Trevor, who was still a peculiar mixture of grass green and blue.

"I've tried to make Trevor take his medicine, but he just refuses to," said Neville dolefully. "Can you persuade him a bit for me?"

Jeanne took Trevor on her palm and said something to him. Trevor stared back at her, gulping gently and blinking.

Jeanne looked at him for a while, then smiled at Neville.

"He says you're trying to give him the wrong medicine, Neville. It should be from the bottle with the red cap, not the black one."

"Oh!" said Neville, going pink. He thanked her, and then trotted out the door, clutching Trevor.

Harry looked at the thick book Jeanne was reading.

"Journal of Medicinal Potions and Herbal Remedies," he read. He looked at her, puzzled.

"What are you reading that for, Jeanne?" he asked. "It can't be for Neville; it's far too advanced - those are published papers."

"So they are," agreed Jeanne. "Some of the terms are so technical I don't understand them." She shrugged, and said evasively, "It's just for general knowledge."

She picked up Hagrid's pink umbrella and started pointing it at the jars on the floor, labelling each one.

Harry sat and watched her.

"Are you still helping Snape?" he asked. "I would have thought, with Flynn around, you wouldn't have to, any more."

Jeanne pointed the umbrella at the last jar, but nothing happened. She whacked the umbrella on the floor, then tried again. A blank label appeared on the jar.

She gave a small sigh.

"Hagrid's umbrella is acting up again," she said. "I guess I have to do it the other way."

She pointed a finger at the blank label, and the word "Agapanthus" appeared on it.

Harry looked at her face. She was wearing her usual sullen expression, and there were shadows under her eyes, like Lupin sometimes had.

"Are you all right?" he asked. "You look tired."

She just sighed again, and stared at the jars.

They sat in silence for a while, and then Harry spoke.

"Something's bothering you, Jeanne," he said. "I don't want to pry, but both Hagrid and I are worried about you. Can't we do anything to help?"

She looked at him, then shook her head.

She was silent a while longer, staring at the floor, and then she finally spoke.

"A week ago I went to see Remus," she said. "I more or less begged him to change his mind, and to let us be more than friends. But he wouldn't agree."

Harry looked at her in surprise.

"But - I thought you told me you were content to just be friends!"

She bit her lip.

"Things have changed," she said, not looking at him. "Time is running out."

Harry looked blank.

"I'm sorry...I - I don't understand."

She sighed.

"I'm sorry, Harry. I don't really want to talk about it. Please try and understand."

She put all the jars into a box, and got up to go. At the door, she paused, and looked at Harry.

"And please don't tell Hagrid."

"All right," said Harry, feeling rather worried.

She looked depressed. Without another word, she turned and left, shutting the door behind her.

Harry knew he was being a busybody, but he was so worried about Jeanne that he started keeping tabs on her by using the Marauder's Map. She had been suicidal in the past, and he wasn't going to take any chances.

The Map seemed to be behaving better lately. Harry didn't notice any more people suddenly mysteriously vanishing, and Jeanne now always appeared to be in Hogwarts. He noticed she seemed to be spending a lot of her time closeted in her

room. Harry wondered what she was up to; at first he thought she was sick, but then he would see her later that same day looking fine, if a bit tired.

She was still giving Neville tuition; but she stopped attending Hagrid's Care of Magical Creatures classes.

"Tol' her she needn' come," said Hagrid, when they asked about her. "She ask'd me if she could stop, an' I said yes, since she's not bin lookin' well lately. Guess it was jus' a matter of time before she has ter drop somethin', she can't keep havin' a finger in so many pies."

But the most extraordinary thing that Harry noticed from the Map was that Jeanne seemed to be spending more time with Marcus Flynn. At first, he thought she must be discussing potions with him, just as she did with Snape. But then, he saw them together in Hogsmeade.

Harry had just come out of Zonko's, together with Ron and Hermione, when the latter grabbed his arm and said, "look!"

Jeanne and Flynn were standing nearby, looking at jewellery. The jewellery shop was not Grenivere's, where Professor Lupin had obtained the wolf pendant, but a new and trendier looking shop which had booths outside so as to attract more customers. Signs stuck on each booth said, "Anti-shoplifting charm activated".

Harry couldn't believe his eyes.

"But - Jeanne doesn't even like jewellery!" he said. "I've seen her in a jewellery shop before, and she looked totally bored."

"She doesn't look bored, now," said Ron. "She looks like she's having the time of her life. And Flynn seems to be buying up half the shop for her."

They went a bit closer, close enough to hear what Jeanne and Flynn were saying.

"We might want to have a look at Grenivere's shop after this," Flynn said.

Jeanne frowned.

"I don't go to Grenivere's, Marcus," she said. "His wares are all of very low quality."

Harry couldn't believe his ears. He watched as Flynn bought five necklaces, and gave them to Jeanne. They then turned and disappeared into the crowd.

"Those necklaces cost a lot," said Hermione. "I didn't know Jeanne had such expensive taste."

"She doesn't!" said Harry, still unable to believe what he'd just seen.

"Looks like Flynn's persistence has paid off," said Ron. "Though I must say it's odd. He really doesn't seem to be Jeanne's type."

"No," agreed Hermione sadly, "I thought she and Professor Lupin made a much better couple."

Several days went by before Harry had an opportunity to talk to Jeanne.

His chance came when he met her one day, after his Herbology class. She had just collected some plant samples from Professor Sprout, probably for one of Snape's potions.

"Are you going back to the castle as well, Jeanne?" he asked, falling in step with her.

She nodded, but did not smile. She seemed rather distant, and there was a strangely resolute look on her face.

Harry looked at her.

"I saw you at Hogsmeade last weekend, with Professor Flynn."

He'd half expected her to look guilty, or start explaining why she'd been with Flynn, but she didn't.

"Did you?" she said quietly. "I didn't see you."

Harry felt something wasn't quite right.

"I thought you didn't like Flynn, Jeanne."

She didn't look at him.

"Things have changed, Harry."

Harry was nonplussed.

"Is - is everything all right?" he asked.

"It's as fine as it can be."

Harry couldn't stand it any more.

"Jeanne!" he said, coming to a halt, and looking at her.

She stopped, and looked at him. There was an odd expression in her eyes - determined, resolute and strangely despairing.

"What's happening? Why were you with Flynn? What about Professor Lupin?"

Jeanne looked slightly bitter.

"I told you already, Harry. Remus and I are through," she said.

"I don't believe it!" said Harry. "Don't tell me you don't care for him any more."

She looked at him, then looked away.

"I've made my choice," she said quietly.

Harry couldn't believe his ears.

"You mean, you're really going together with Flynn?" he said incredulously.

She nodded.

"But - how can you?" Harry asked. "You don't care for him, do you?"

"That's not important, Harry," she said.

Harry opened his mouth to speak, but she held up a hand.

"I've made my choice, Harry," she said. "I know what I'm doing. You don't understand now, but maybe you will, one day."

She dropped one of the plants, and bent to pick it up.

"I have to go now," she said, not looking at him. "I'll talk to you another time." And she walked off without another glance, leaving Harry staring after her in amazement.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Another Hogsmeade weekend had arrived. Harry, Ron and Hermione made their usual round to Honeydukes, Zonko's and the Three Broomsticks. Then, since they still had some time left, they just strolled around the village, looking at the various shop windows.

They were passing Grenivere's shop when Hermione suddenly said,

"Can I go in for a minute? I just want to have a quick glance at the bracelets."

"No!" said Ron. "I know what you're like in a jewellery shop, Hermione...you'll be in there for hours."

But Hermione was already disappearing inside the shop.

"We'll give her five minutes, then go in and drag her out," said Harry.

Ron, however, had seen something.

"Take a look," he said, tugging at Harry's arm, "isn't that Jeanne in the shop?"

Harry peered inside. A lady was sitting at the far end of the shop, together with Mr Grenivere.

"It looks like her," he said. "But I thought she told Flynn she doesn't like Grenivere's wares."

"Looks like Hermione hasn't seen Jeanne, she's at the opposite end of the shop," said Ron. "Let's go see what Jeanne's up to, now."

Harry didn't want to, but Ron was already dragging him in.

Jeanne and Mr Grenivere were bending over something. They were so absorbed that neither noticed Ron or Harry approaching them.

"I can take these three, but not the other two," Grenivere was saying.

"That's fine," said Jeanne. "There's a pawnshop down the street, anyway."

Grenivere handed something in an envelope to Jeanne, and she tucked it away in her bag. Then she looked up and saw Ron and Harry.

"Hi there, Jeanne," said Ron, "what are you doing here?"

Jeanne looked rather dismayed. Mr Grenivere, however, answered for her.

"Miss Graham and I have a secret arrangement," he said, looking at them with his piercing blue eyes. "She has been showing me some of my competitor's wares."

Jeanne looked at him gratefully, then swept the necklaces on the counter into her bag.

"I have to go now," she said. "Good-bye." And she hurried out of the shop, with a quick smile at Ron and Harry.

Grenivere watched her go with a mixture of pity and compassion in his eyes.

It was a Saturday evening. Harry and Ron had tarried at Hagrid's a bit longer than usual, and found themselves hurrying back to the castle before they were late for dinner.

When they reached the Entrance Hall, they stopped for a while to get their breath.

Ron nudged Harry.

"Look," he said. "It's Flynn. And he's got a new broom."

Professor Flynn was standing near the marble staircase, holding a very expensive-looking broom. Its body looked like it had been coated with gold. He looked up and saw them, and gave them his childlike smile.

"How do you like my new luxury broom, boys?" he said. "Latest model - Gemini 3000."

Ron's eyes were wide as he examined the broom. Harry looked at Flynn; he was wearing elegant new robes. They were black, trimmed with velvet.

"Are you going somewhere?" he asked.

"Count Erigon is having a dinner party," said Flynn. "I'm just waiting for Jeanne - ah, here she is."

Harry and Ron turned around. What they saw made them open their eyes wide in astonishment.

Jeanne was coming carefully down the stairs, because she was wearing extremely high heels. She was dressed in crimson satin robes. Rubies glittered at her throat, and her hair was piled high. She looked terribly sophisticated.

She gave Harry and Ron a small smile, then seated herself on the broom behind Flynn.

"Good-bye, boys," said Flynn, and then the broom lifted smoothly away from the ground, and sailed off into the sky.

Harry and Ron were still staring in amazement.

The classroom was almost empty now. Defence Against the Dark Arts had ended, and only Harry, Ron and Hermione were left.

"You go ahead," said Harry to Ron and Hermione, glancing at Professor Lupin who was still at his desk. "I need to ask Lupin something about the cockatrice essay."

However, he had barely walked over to Lupin's table when there was a knock on the door, and Professor Maricai came in.

"Remus, the chance has come!" she cried, ignoring Harry. "There's a Boggart hiding in my cupboard...it's the ideal chance for you to teach me how to get rid of it."

Lupin didn't look very enthusiastic.

"I'll come up in a while, Venilda," he said. "Harry and I are discussing something at the moment."

"No!" cried Professor Maricai. "You have to come now! I have an appointment soon...I'll need some of the articles in the cupboard."

Lupin looked slightly exasperated, but his voice was still polite.

"Very well," he said. "I'll come to your office now."

"It's not in my office cupboard, Remus," said Professor Maricai. "It's in my bedroom cupboard."

Harry could see from Lupin's face that he didn't relish the idea of being alone with Professor Maricai in her bedroom.

"Harry, why don't you come along?" said Lupin. "I'm sure this would be educational for you."

"OK," said Harry.

"Oh, he needn't come, Remus," said Professor Maricai. "I'm sure the boy has better things to do."

"He's coming along, Venilda," said Lupin firmly. "It will be a good experience for him."

Professor Maricai's bedroom was large and luxuriously furnished. Her four poster bed had silk curtains, and expensive-looking carpets lay on the floor. The rest of the furniture in the room had all been crafted in an ornate baroque style, including the cupboard where the Boggart was lurking.

Lupin patiently explained what Professor Maricai had to do. Harry noticed that she didn't seem to be a very competent witch, she was holding her wand - of carved ivory - wrongly.

"All right," said Lupin, "Ready? Here we go!"

He pointed his wand at the cupboard, and a bolt of light hit the handles. The cupboard door opened, and out came the Boggart. Harry was startled; it had taken the form of a hideous crone - matted strawlike hair, wrinkles on its face, and hands like claws. It had a pair of staring green eyes. Looking at it, Harry suddenly realised the Boggart was in fact Professor Maricai, in the form of a hag.

Professor Maricai seemed to have realised it too. She went deathly pale, and stammered, "No, - I couldn't ever look like that - no!" And then she started screaming hysterically.

Lupin gave an exclamation and quickly pulled her away from the Boggart, which was slowly lurching toward her.

"Harry!" he said sharply, "Take her to a corner, will you?"

Harry led Professor Maricai, still in hysterics, toward the bed. He knew Lupin would have no trouble with the Boggart; it would turn into the moon when it saw Lupin, before a wave of his wand made it disappear.

That was why Harry's blood suddenly went cold when he heard Lupin's voice saying, "Oh, my God."

Harry quickly deposited Professor Maricai onto the bed, and turned around. What he saw made his heart skip a beat.

The Boggart hadn't turned into the moon; it had turned into Jeanne.

She stood there, looking at Lupin with a stricken face, holding out one hand. The hand was bloody and mangled, as if some animal had savaged it.

Then she began to transform. Fur was growing on her body...her shoulders were hunching...

Harry stared in horror. She had become a werewolf.

Professor Lupin was standing as if he had turned to stone. His face was very pale.

The werewolf snarled viciously and started forward. Lupin didn't move.

Desperately, Harry ran forward, wand in hand.

"Riddikulus!" he shouted. The werewolf burst into wisps of smoke, and was gone.

Lupin stood there, still staring at the place where the werewolf had been. Then, he walked to a nearby chair, sat down in it, and buried his face in his hands.

Harry looked at him worriedly. He went over and sat down, next to Lupin.

"Are - are you all right?" he asked.

Lupin didn't answer for a minute. Then he slowly lowered his hands, and straightened up. There was a slightly haunted look in his eyes.

"Yes, I'm all right, Harry," he said, not looking at Harry. His voice was shaking slightly. "I think - I need to be alone for a while."

He looked at Professor Maricai, who was still having hysterics on her bed.

"I'd be obliged if you would take Venilda to see Madam Pomfrey."

Harry got up slowly and began to lead Professor Maricai out of the room. He paused at the door, and looked back.

Lupin was still sitting there, staring at the spot where Jeanne had been standing.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

It was a fine, rather warm afternoon; the sun was shining, and a gentle wind was blowing up from the lake. Harry, Ron and Hermione were walking toward the castle, rather muddy and with their books in their hands. They had just finished their Herbology lesson.

At the entrance, they happened to meet Professor Lupin, coming from the direction of the lake. He was carrying a small tank of water containing a strange little black creature; it reminded Harry of the grindylow they had studied during their third year.

"Oh, a garrelynsk!" cried Hermione, when she saw it.

Lupin smiled.

"Right as usual, Hermione," he said. "I just found it in the small pool by the lake -"

He stopped, because someone was coming down the stairs leading from the Entrance Hall. It was Professor Flynn.

He was carrying an ivory quiver filled with arrows, and a golden bow, and he was wearing brown robes. Harry recognised them as the type of robes usually used for flying-fox-hunting.

Flynn beamed when he saw them, and gave them his usual childlike stare. He held up his bow and quiver proudly.

"Beautiful, aren't they? I just got them delivered."

Lupin looked at him with a peculiar expression in his eyes.

"You know hunting isn't allowed here at Hogwarts, Marcus," he said.

"Oh, it's all right, Remus," said Flynn, staring at Lupin in his childlike manner. "I'm just going to shoot a few arrows in the air, that's all."

He smiled like a small boy, and then continued on his way, walking to the far end of the field.

Lupin looked after him, frowning.

Ron was watching too.

"Good thing Jeanne isn't here," he said, without thinking. "She doesn't approve of hunting."

Lupin said nothing. Hermione gave Harry a quick look, and then tried to change the subject.

"So - is this garrelynsk for our next class?" she asked.

Lupin was still frowning and watching Marcus Flynn, but he now turned back to them and smiled.

"Not for you people. I was thinking of letting the third-years try it out."

He was about to continue, when Ron suddenly cried out.

"Look at that hawk! It's attacking Professor Flynn!"

A hawk was diving out of the sky. Flynn had let off an arrow at it, but the arrow missed. The hawk lunged at Flynn, and he dropped his bow.

Flynn picked the bow up, and fitted another arrow to it. The hawk was circling, preparing for another attack.

Lupin had suddenly turned pale.

"That's not a hawk!" he said sharply, and dropping the garrelynsk, he pulled out his wand and started sprinting toward Flynn.

Harry and the others watched him, startled. It was a few moments before Harry suddenly understood what Lupin meant.

"Come on!" he shouted, and started running after Lupin.

Flynn had released the arrow, but it missed, and the hawk lunged at him again, giving out a piercing cry. This time, he didn't drop the bow. As the hawk rose swiftly up into the air again, he took three arrows, and aiming, shot them off rapidly in succession.

Harry and the others had stopped halfway across the field, and they stood there, watching. The hawk was high in the sky, circling around, getting ready for another attack. The arrows were moving in a curve, heading toward it.

"Flynn has put a spell on the arrows," whispered Hermione. "They're following the hawk."

Lupin raised his wand. The first arrow exploded in a small burst of light; so did the second. The third one, however, went straight into the hawk.

Harry heard the hawk scream; then it was falling, the arrow protruding from it. It was falling - and then, it wasn't a hawk anymore.

"Oh no!" whispered Hermione in horror. "It wasn't a hawk. It's Jeanne, Harry."

But Harry was already running forward again. He saw Lupin raise his wand again, and Jeanne started falling more slowly. Slower and slower, till she finally came to a stop just before reaching the ground. Her long hair had come loose, and it streamed out behind her.

She was lying on her back, conscious, when Harry ran up. Her eyes were wide in shock, and she was breathing hard. The arrow was sticking out of her left shoulder.

Lupin was next to her, holding her hands in his. He looked up when the three of them ran up, and said sharply,

"One of you, go and get Madam Pomfrey, quick!"

Ron immediately turned, and started speeding back toward the castle.

Jeanne was looking at Lupin, her eyes wide. Her hair was lying in a black pool around her, on the ground.

"You'll be all right, Jeanne," said Lupin quietly, holding her hands. "It's only a shoulder wound."

Her breathing seemed calmer now. She was still looking at Lupin, wide-eyed. Then, all of a sudden, she burst into tears, clutching at his hands.

"I'm so sorry, Remus," she sobbed. "I'm so sorry about everything!"

Lupin looked alarmed. He tried to calm her, but she kept on sobbing. Finally, he just quietly held her hands in his, until her sobs began to subside.

Hermione was looking back at the castle.

"Madam Pomfrey's coming," she called.

Harry turned to look. He could see Ron and Madam Pomfrey running down the castle steps.

He turned back to look at Jeanne. She was quiet now, staring to one side, avoiding Lupin's gaze. There was a look of despair in her eyes. Harry noticed, though, that she was holding on to Lupin's hands rather tightly.

Madam Pomfrey didn't take long to get the arrow out. She took hold of it, and it suddenly dissolved slowly and vanished in her hand. Jeanne gave a little gasp; blood was flowing from her shoulder.

"I'll just fix that up in a jiffy," said Madam Pomfrey, calmly and cheerfully, and she did; the shoulder soon looked good as new.

"Bring her to the hospital wing, Remus," said Madam Pomfrey, getting to her feet. "She should get a few days' rest. She's healed physically, but being emotionally healed is another matter." Madam Pomfrey was looking at Lupin in a curious way as she said this.

Lupin, however, was busy conjuring a stretcher with his wand, and didn't notice. He laid Jeanne on it, and the stretcher then rose into the air, and started to move off.

"Can I do anything to help?"

Harry looked up. Professor Flynn had been standing by all the while, looking helplessly on.

Lupin, who had started off after the stretcher, turned around. Ignoring Flynn, he looked instead at the bow and quiver, which were lying on the ground nearby.

"We won't need those any more," said Lupin quietly. He pointed his wand at the bow and quiver. There was a cracking noise, and they broke into a hundred little pieces. Then, they slowly sank into the ground, and disappeared.

Flynn gave a cry of dismay. Lupin, however, simply turned around without even glancing at him, and strode off without another word.

Harry and the others turned to follow. Halfway back to the castle, Harry turned back to look.

Professor Flynn was standing like a statue, still staring at the spot where the bow and quiver had sunk into the ground.

Harry had thought that after the shooting incident, Jeanne would surely call it quits with Marcus Flynn; but he was wrong.

About a week later, he was just going to look for Professor Lupin in his office, when he ran into him in the Entrance Hall, instead.

"What is it, Harry?" asked Lupin, as Harry came running up.

"My - essay," panted Harry, gasping for breath. "I - know it's overdue, - sorry - about - that."

Lupin took the essay, then looked at his watch.

"I still have some time before my meeting," he said. "Since you're here, why don't we discuss your previous essay? The one about cockatrices...there were some points you weren't too clear on, if I remember rightly..."

They retreated to a nearby alcove to talk about it. Lupin was just beginning to talk about weasels and rue when he suddenly looked up, as if something had distracted him.

Harry turned around to look. It was Professor Flynn, with his luxury broomstick again. He was dressed in blue velvet robes this time, with a lacy cravat at his throat. Harry thought the cravat made him look terribly silly.

Flynn was looking at the stairs, as if waiting for someone. It can't be Jeanne, thought Harry. Surely, after what had happened, Jeanne wouldn't want to have anything more to do with Flynn.

Professor Lupin seemed to have forgotten about the cockatrice essay. He simply stood there, quietly watching Flynn.

Flynn suddenly smiled expectantly. Harry turned to look at the marble staircase, and his heart sank.

Jeanne was coming quietly down, dressed in purple velvet evening robes. The expression on her face could only be described as stoic.

She came up to Flynn and nodded at him in greeting. Neither of them had noticed Harry or Lupin.

Flynn looked at her.

"You look very nice in purple, Jeanne, but didn't I tell you, tonight's theme is blue?"

An unhappy look came into her eyes for a moment, as if she were remembering something. Then, it was gone.

"I told you, I don't wear blue any more, Marcus," she said quietly.

Harry stole a look at Lupin. He was watching them with a curious expression on his face.

Flynn continued to examine Jeanne's outfit.

"And the amethyst necklace would go better with this dress...you know, the one I bought for you a month ago."

"Oh, it's gone," said Jeanne, without thinking.

Flynn looked at her in surprise.

"Gone? You mean - lost?"

Jeanne looked dismayed for a split second, then recovered.

"I mean, it's gone, out of fashion," she said, and gave him a brilliant smile. "The one I'm wearing is better, believe me."

She made a move to mount the broom, but dropped her purse by mistake. It burst open as it fell to the floor, and something fell out.

Harry leaned forward to get a closer look. It was Lupin's wolf pendant.

Jeanne made a move to retrieve the pendant, but Flynn was faster, and picked it up first. Jeanne suddenly looked furious.

"Don't you touch that!" she cried, snatching it away from him.

He looked confused.

"Why are you still carrying that thing around, Jeanne?" he asked, fixing his childlike gaze on her. "I remember telling you to throw it away."

Her hands were trembling slightly as she dropped the pendant back in her purse. She seemed to be trying to compose herself.

"It has sentimental value, Marcus," she said, in a controlled voice. Then she looked at the time.

"It's getting late," she said. "We'd better go."

Harry watched as they flew off on the Gemini-3000. Jeanne, sitting behind Flynn, seemed to be staring daggers at his back.

He turned to look at Professor Lupin. Lupin's face was now thoughtful, and he was still staring at the Entranceway, although no one was there now. Then, he looked down, and saw Harry staring at him.

Harry knew he shouldn't say anything, but somehow the words just came out.

"She still cares for you," he said.

Lupin looked at him in surprise.

"She's only with Flynn because you wouldn't have her," said Harry. "She'd come back, if you asked her to."

Lupin looked at Harry, then at the floor.

"Has she - said anything to you?" he asked, not looking at Harry.

"N-no," said Harry, wishing Jeanne had.

Lupin was silent a moment, as if thinking. Then, he sighed.

"She's better off with him, Harry," he said, looking at the Entranceway again. "She'll have a better life with him than she'll ever have with me."

"But she doesn't care for him!" protested Harry. "It's so obvious - "

But Lupin was now suddenly looking at something behind Harry.

Harry turned around. Madam Pomfrey was walking briskly up to them.

"Have you forgotten the meeting, Remus?" she asked, sounding slightly out of breath.
"We've all been waiting for you upstairs."

Lupin looked dismayed.

"I'm afraid I did, Poppy," he said, apologetically, and turned to Harry.

"I have to go, Harry. We'll finish up on the cockatrices another time, shall we?"

He gave Harry a nod and smiled, and then went off with Madam Pomfrey.

Harry found himself staring at the Entranceway, thinking about Jeanne. It just didn't make sense. Why on earth was she with Marcus Flynn?

Exams were coming. Harry knew he should be studying hard, but sometimes he found himself just staring at his books and wondering what the matter was with Jeanne.

As the days went by, she had become more and more withdrawn, and her expression now was more worried than sullen. The Marauder's Map showed that besides attending to her usual gamekeeping duties, she was either always closeted in her room, or else was with Professor Flynn. Harry couldn't understand her behaviour with Flynn: she was seldom alone with him; usually, there was a third person present. Twice Harry even observed her attending staff meetings with him, with Snape, Dumbledore and Lupin also present. Even stranger, he started noticing that very often, she would transform herself into a bird and fly to Flynn's office several minutes after someone - usually Snape - had come into his office to talk to him.

"Jeanne's going crazy," thought Harry. "I just can't imagine what she's up to."

Even worse, the last full moon before the exams, she didn't go to Lupin's room at all. In fact, neither she nor Flynn were in Hogwarts during that period. Harry later found out that Flynn had been in Edinburgh at the time, and felt sure that Jeanne had gone with him.

He assumed that Madam Pomfrey must have made the usual tonic for Lupin, but he looked so tired and ill when he came back for classes, that Harry started having misgivings. He casually broached the subject to Madam Pomfrey, but she merely looked surprised and said she thought Jeanne had prepared the tonic, as usual.

"That means Lupin went without the tonic altogether," thought Harry. "No wonder he looks so awful. And he isn't his usual cheerful self either."

Harry was beginning to feel very disappointed with Jeanne. Somehow the fact that she wasn't even bothering about Lupin when he was so unwell made Harry especially angry. She now hardly seemed to notice Harry or any of the others whenever they met along the corridor, or in the grounds, and when they went to Hagrid's she was seldom there any more. Ron and Hermione didn't really seem to mind, but Harry found that he did, although he would never have admitted it to anyone.

Jeanne seemed to be ignoring Lupin as well. Harry had seen them pass each other along the corridor several times, without acknowledging each other's existence. She now came often to the Hall for meals, and always sat with Flynn. Lupin appeared his usual calm self on such occasions, but there was a certain look in his eyes whenever he happened to look at Jeanne and Flynn which made Harry feel uncomfortable.

Although he knew it was none of his affair, Harry couldn't help feeling that Jeanne had betrayed Lupin. He suspected that she must have accompanied Flynn to meet his family during the Edinburgh trip. Since then, she had ceased to look worried, and her expression could now better be described as resolute, or determined.

Harry had been doing so much spying on Jeanne that he was spending less and less time with Ron and Hermione. At first, they let him be, hoping that whatever was troubling him would go away. Then, finally, they confronted him.

"All right, Harry," said Ron one day in the Gryffindor common room, "Out with it. We know something's been bothering you for the last two months."

Harry looked at him and Hermione. Both of them were looking worried.

"Nothing's wrong," he said, trying to look noncommittal. "It's just the exams."

"Exams never bothered you like this before," said Ron, disbelievingly.

Hermione was looking quietly at Harry.

"I know what it is, Harry," she said. "You're worried about Jeanne and Professor Lupin, aren't you?"

"There's nothing between the- " began Harry.

"Yes, there is, Harry," said Hermione, cutting him short. "You know there is, and I know it too. I've known it since the Christmas Ball, remember?"

Harry gave in. After all, Jeanne and Lupin were a thing of the past now. What was there to hide?

"You're wrong, Hermione," he said. "There was never anything. Jeanne told me Lupin didn't want to develop a relationship. He was afraid of harming her, because he's a werewolf."

They stared at him.

"What bothers me is," said Harry, "why is she with Flynn? I don't think she even likes him. It's as if she's after him for his money, or just to spite Lupin for spurning her."

"But - that's not like Jeanne at all," objected Hermione.

"That's precisely it," said Harry. "She's completely changed...and she's dumped all of us as friends too - she's not talking to any of us any more...she's stopped helping Hagrid with the Magical Creatures classes...she's even stopped giving Neville tuition."

"Actually, Harry, Neville said that he was the one who wanted to stop," said Hermione, glancing round the common room to make sure Neville wasn't listening. "He said Jeanne was looking so tired and worried, he didn't want to bother her."

"Maybe he's just saying it," said Ron. "Neville will never say anything bad about Jeanne."

"But, Harry," said Hermione, looking rather anxiously at him, "Jeanne doesn't have to do all that extra stuff, you know - tutoring Neville, and all that. Her job here is to help Hagrid as gamekeeper; that's what Dumbledore's paying her for."

Although this was true, it didn't make Harry feel any better.

"She should think of how Lupin feels," he said, grumpily. "Lupin's not well off, and for her to go after a man who's so obviously rich - well, it's cruel."

Ron was absently leafing through his History of Magic textbook.

"Lupin could have had Professor Maricai," he said. "She's definitely rich, the amount of jewels she wears every day."

Harry gave a snort of laughter.

"That's idiotic, Ron," he said. "You know ever since that incident with the Boggart, Professor Maricai's been terrified of Lupin. She now sits as far away from him as she can."

"What really happened, actually?" asked Hermione, wide-eyed. "What Professor Maricai's been telling everyone is that the Boggart turned into a wolf."

Harry felt that he couldn't tell them about Jeanne turning into a werewolf. He felt sure Lupin wouldn't like people knowing about his greatest fear.

"Actually, the Boggart changed into Professor Maricai herself, only she looked like a hag," he said. "Of course she wouldn't tell anyone that, so I guess she made the wolf up."

Hermione was now thinking about Jeanne again.

"You know, Harry," she said thoughtfully, "about Jeanne - well, it's her choice. It's her life. After all, it was Lupin who rejected her. Surely she's free to choose whoever she wants? Why should we judge her?"

Harry stared at them.

"Why are you all sticking up for her?" he asked, crossly. "I thought you'd be on my side."

"We are," said Ron quickly. "We're just trying to be - well, objective about it."

Harry sighed, and opened his spellbook again.

"Forget it," he said. "I guess I should just think of the exams now. I can continue being angry with Jeanne once they're over."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The exams flew by faster than Harry expected. Before he knew it, it was the night before the last exam, which was Potions, to be held the following morning.

That night, most of the students were ready to unwind a bit. Only Neville was still sitting in a corner, anxiously trying to study. He was obviously afraid that the disaster that had occurred the previous year would repeat itself.

"You'll do fine, Neville," said Harry, trying to encourage him. "Last year you'd have done well, only Malfoy sabotaged you."

Neville still didn't look comforted.

"Something always happens," he said, his eyes still glued to his Potions textbook. "Jeanne and I worked on almost nothing but Potions this year. I don't want to let her down. This is the last chance I have to do well, for her."

"Last chance?" said Harry. "What do you mean?"

Neville looked up, surprised.

"Don't you know? Well, Professor Flynn probably won't be here next year - he'll have finished his research here. I guess if he leaves, Jeanne will probably follow him."

Something clicked in Harry's mind.

"So that's what she meant," he said to himself. "She said, 'Time is running out'; she was wondering whether to go after Flynn, and she knew she only had a few months to do it, because he was going to leave."

Harry had his chance to be angry with Jeanne earlier than he expected. Around ten that evening, a tiny owl flew in through the common room window and over to Harry, depositing a letter in his lap.

Ron looked shocked.

"That's my owl!" he said.

Pigwidgeon hopped onto Ron's shoulder, and gave him a peck on the ear.

Harry opened the letter. He looked angry after reading it, and crumpled it up and tossed it aside.

"What is it, Harry?" asked Hermione, anxiously.

"Jeanne," said Harry shortly. "Says she wants to see me."

"Why is she using Pig?" asked Ron indignantly. "He's never around nowadays. I've hardly seen him during the last few months, since the Easter holidays."

Harry was still looking angry. Hermione, seeing this, asked timidly, "Aren't you going to see her?"

"No," said Harry shortly. He looked at Pigwidgeon, who was still nibbling Ron's ear.

"You can tell her, the answer is no," he said to the tiny owl. "Tell her I don't want to see her!"

Pigwidgeon cocked his head to one side, looking at Harry. Then, he fluttered out of the window in a blur of feathers.

Ten minutes later, there was another flutter of wings, and a scops owl flew in the window, landing in front of Harry. It blurred, and Jeanne was standing there. There was a sudden hush in the common room, as everyone turned to look at her.

"Harry, I need to talk to you," she said, looking directly at him. "Outside."

Harry felt the anger rising in him. Now was his chance to tell her off.

Once they were outside, she turned to face him. There was a flicker of anguish in her eyes when she saw how angry he looked, but her voice was steady when she spoke.

"I need to ask you for a favour, Harry," she said.

Harry felt even angrier. After the way she had been treating all of them, how could she have the cheek to ask for a favour?

"What is it?" he said, controlling himself.

She had a resolute look on her face.

"I need to borrow your Invisibility Cloak."

"What?" said Harry, astonished. "What do you want it for?"

She shook her head. "I can't tell you."

"Then you can forget it!" he said angrily.

"Harry!" she said, looking at him, with pleading eyes. Her voice was shaking a bit. She took a breath to compose herself, then continued.

"I know you're angry with me," she said. "I don't blame you. But you don't understand what I'm doing. It's really important. Please, please lend me the Cloak."

Harry had been wanting for so long to tell Jeanne off that he wasn't really listening.

"The answer is no!" he said angrily. "Do you think, after the way you've been treating all of us lately, I'm going to do you any favours? Hagrid's a bundle of nerves during classes now, and it's all back to flobberworms again. And Neville...he's in such a state about the Potions tomorrow - and you've stopped helping him as well!"

He stopped to catch his breath. She had gone pale, and opened her mouth to reply, but Harry was already continuing.

"Hagrid...Neville...you've been ignoring all of us! You've dumped us for such a shallow reason - just because you wanted to spend time with Marcus Flynn! And you

don't even care for him! If you did, it would be more forgivable, but you don't! You're just after his money!!"

She tried to speak, but Harry went on.

"But worst of all is how you've treated Professor Lupin! You deprived him of his tonic! -"

"You don't understand, Harry - he can't take the tonic - one month before -"

"And he still cares for you!" Harry said angrily, not listening to her. "You don't know how much you've hurt him! Did you hear about the Boggart? Did you?"

"I heard - I heard it turned into a wolf!" she whispered.

"Not just a wolf!" he shouted. "It was you! It turned into you first, and then it turned into a werewolf! That's what Lupin's most afraid of! He still cares for you! You should have seen his face that day, the look in his eyes..."

Jeanne had turned away. She was shaking, but controlled herself with what seemed a superhuman effort. When she turned around, she looked quiet and resolute again. She came over to Harry and looked directly at him.

"You've said your share, Harry," she said quietly. "I know you hate me. But I'm desperate; I need that Cloak. You don't know how important it is! What do I have to say, to make you agree? Do you want me to get down on my knees and beg you? I swear I will, if I have to!" There was a note of desperation in her voice.

Harry's anger flared up again. After all he had said, how could she have the cheek to still ask for the Cloak?

"No!" he said. "You can beg me a thousand times, and I wouldn't lend it to you!"

He turned and marched away without a second glance, leaving Jeanne staring after him. He spat out the password and entered the common room, slamming the portrait behind him.

The Gryffindors who had been crowding around the portrait hole to listen suddenly drew back when he appeared. He took no notice of them, but marched up to the bedroom. He was in no mood to do any more studying that night.

He lay in bed, ignoring the others when they came upstairs.

Harry looked at the time; it was one in the morning, and he still hadn't been able to fall asleep.

He turned and lay on his back, staring into space. The anger that had gripped him earlier had faded, and now he felt oddly ashamed.

"What does she want the Cloak for?" he kept asking himself. He was beginning to feel rather uncomfortable now. Perhaps he shouldn't have gotten so angry; he regretted some of the things he'd said, now. Hermione was right - Lupin had, after all, rejected Jeanne; and it was her own life - surely she could choose who she wanted to be with?

Harry sat up in bed. He was wide awake. He kept seeing the desperate look in Jeanne's eyes, kept hearing her say, 'Do you want me to get down on my knees and beg you? I swear I will, if I have to!'

He stared out into the darkness, thinking.

"Jeanne never begged anyone for anything," he thought. "Even in Kamchatka, Deorg said she'd never begged him for mercy. What could make her so desperate -?"

He thought of how he'd first met her in the cave, of the horrible life she must have led during her three years there, with only the mirror for company. Staying with the Dursleys was nothing compared to that.

He shifted his position on the bed slightly, and something that sparkled caught his eye.

It was the framed photograph of himself and his parents that Jeanne had given him, which he kept by his bed. He stared at it a while, looking at the shimmering lights in the frame, and thinking of the time and effort she must have spent to capture all that starlight, to make a present, for him. Oddly, the sight of it suddenly made up his mind for him.

"I never gave her anything in return," he said to himself.

He got out of bed, and took the Invisibility Cloak out of his trunk. Wrapping himself in it, he went down the stairs and out of the common room, making his way toward Jeanne's room. He was just about to knock on her door when he heard footsteps approaching.

He looked up. It was Professor Lupin.

Harry quietly tiptoed to one side of the door. Lupin came right up next to him. He hesitated, then knocked.

Jeanne took a while to open the door. Her eyes widened when she saw who it was.

"Remus?" she whispered.

Lupin looked at her.

"Can I come in?" he asked.

"Of course," she murmured, letting him in. Harry didn't even think about whether he should be eavesdropping or not. For some reason, he simply felt that he had to get inside that room. He managed to slip in, just before the door closed.

Lupin looked around the room. "You've changed it back," he said.

Harry stared. Jeanne's room had reverted to what it must have been when she'd first moved in. It was a Hogwarts room, with stone walls. The cheerful floor to ceiling windows, the wooden panelling, were all gone.

Jeanne nodded. "I won't be here much longer," she said quietly, her eyes on the floor.

Harry was surprised, then remembered: she was leaving with Flynn. He looked around the room. It looked bare, as if Jeanne was already packed and waiting to leave.

Lupin had a rather set expression on his face. He turned, and faced Jeanne squarely.

"I'll make this short," he said, meeting her gaze directly. "You know that Snape and Marcus Flynn claim they have found a cure for me."

She looked at him, then nodded.

"They have been spending the last few weeks trying to persuade me to test it, even though it may be fatal if it doesn't work."

He paused, then said, "I've decided to give it a try."

She looked at him. There was a strange expression on her face.

"I believe it will work," she said quietly.

Lupin forced a laugh. "Your faith in Flynn is touching."

She flushed slightly, but said nothing. Lupin smiled grimly.

"Well, I'm not so sure it will work." He stopped, then continued, looking at her, "I've come to say goodbye."

Jeanne went very pale, her eyes wide, looking at him. She seemed to be struggling with some kind of suppressed emotion. Finally, she lowered her eyes, and said in a low voice, "You hate me, don't you?"

Lupin looked at her a while, then said, "No, Jeanne, I don't hate you." He took a breath, "-I wish you and Marcus well. You'll have a good life with him - "

"Stop!" she said, covering her ears. "Please stop!"

She lowered her hands, and came closer to him.

"Please listen to what I have to say." She paused. "I believe the potion will work. Not because of Marcus," - she held up a hand, "- I believe it will work!"

"When you are cured," - her eyes lit up as she said this - "I want you to promise me one thing."

Lupin's expression was wary. "What is it?"

"Promise me you'll forget me," she said. "Forget I ever existed. That we ever met."

He looked at her a while, and then asked uncertainly, "Are you all right?"

He might well ask; she was as white as a sheet, and shaking slightly.

"I'm fine," she said. "Promise me, Remus. Promise you'll forget about me."

Lupin looked slightly baffled.

"I can't promise I'll forget you," he said. "But I certainly can promise that I'll try."

Jeanne lost her composure.

"You have to promise!" she cried, almost plucking at his robes. "You must promise! -"

"Jeanne!" said Lupin, catching hold of her shoulders and giving her a shake. "Get a grip on yourself! What's the matter?"

She shrugged her shoulders, and he let her go. She stood a while, as if fighting with something within herself, then calmed down.

"I'm sorry," she said, looking at the floor. "I don't know what's come over me."

She raised her eyes to meet his, and the resolute expression was suddenly back on her face.

"You came to say goodbye, Remus," she said, "so let us do so."

She extended a hand to him. He looked at her a moment, then took it.

"I believe the potion will work," she said softly, shaking his hand, "and I wish you a happy life, all the happiness that you deserve."

Lupin said only, "Goodbye, Jeanne."

He released her hand, and went slowly to the door. He opened it, then turned and looked back.

"Tomorrow night, you know..." he said, "Don't come."

There was a peculiar expression on her face.

"Don't worry," she said, rather coldly, "you won't see me there."

He looked at her, then left without a word.

The minute the door shut, Jeanne ran over to it and leaned against it, listening as his footsteps died away. Then she crumpled up on the floor, and wept bitterly.

Harry watched in dismay. Was she losing her mind?

She cried a while, then recovered. Slowly, she got to her feet, then went over to the sofa and took something out from under it. She must have hidden it when Lupin came, thought Harry.

Jeanne placed the object on a table, and sat looking at it. Harry crept curiously over to have a look. It was a small green bottle.

There was suddenly a fluttering of feathers, and Pigwidgeon came flying onto the table. Harry blinked in surprise. The tiny owl had been sitting on top of the cupboard all the while, unnoticed.

Jeanne sighed, and looked at the owl.

"I've committed so many murders before, you'd think it would be easy for me to commit one more," she said to the owl.

Harry's blood ran cold.

Pigwidgeon hooted at her.

"Yes, of course I'm sure I want to do it," she said quietly, picking up the green bottle and looking at it. "It will be the last time I ever kill anyone, anyway. It will all be over, tomorrow night."

There were tears in her eyes. Pigwidgeon looked at her sympathetically. She put the bottle down, and stretching out her hand, she gently stroked him.

"It was easy, last time; but now it's so hard, because I've met him," she said softly, half to herself.

She sighed, and stopped stroking the owl. She stared at the bottle on the table.

"It's all your fault, Remus," she said sadly, "Why couldn't you have accepted me? Then I wouldn't have to do this." Her hands were stained red, with blood.

Harry was listening in horror. He wondered if this was some kind of nightmare.

"I don't believe it," he thought. "She's going to kill Lupin. She's going to poison him because he's rejected her."

At this moment, someone knocked on the door.

"Jeanne?" It was Flynn's voice. "I saw your light on. I know you're awake." Harry, seeing this was his chance to leave, quietly moved over to the door.

Jeanne snatched the bottle from the table and hid it in the cupboard. Then she went to the door and opened it. Harry just managed to squeeze himself out, past Flynn. He stood outside the door, listening.

"About tomorrow night," Flynn was saying, "are you sure you don't want to come?"

"I'm sure, Marcus."

Flynn looked disappointed.

"Well, in case you change your mind," he said, "Don't forget it's nine o' clock sharp, at the small room in the Astronomy Tower. Remus has to be exposed to the full moon when he takes the potion."

Jeanne must have nodded, because Harry didn't hear her reply to this. She then said good night to Flynn, and shut the door.

Harry waited till Flynn had gone, then walked slowly back to the Gryffindor common room, his mind in a whirl. He couldn't believe it - Jeanne was going to kill Lupin! It wasn't possible. And Snape and Flynn - they had found a way to cure Lupin of being a werewolf! So that was what their research had been all about.

"But it doesn't make sense," thought Harry. "Snape hates Lupin. Why should he try to find a cure for him? Unless..."

He stopped in mid-stride, and stood there thinking.

"Lupin said if the potion didn't work, it might be fatal," he said to himself. "Maybe Snape's doctored the potion. So Snape's going to try to kill Lupin too. Or is he in league with Jeanne?"

Harry was beginning to feel very confused. He continued walking back to the dormitory, and got into bed and lay there, feeling dazed.

"I ought to warn Lupin," he thought. "But how do I prove it? He won't believe me."

He was tired now, after all that had happened, and while worrying about it, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The next morning, Harry woke up still feeling tired and confused.

He wanted to tell Ron and Hermione straight away about what had happened the previous night, but there was no time. He couldn't tell them during breakfast, because the rest of the class was there; and the Potions exam would be held right after.

"Are you all right, Harry?" Hermione asked, during breakfast. "You - you look terrible."

Harry looked at her and Ron; both of them were looking worriedly at him. Neville, Seamus Finnigan and Dean Thomas, who were sitting nearby, were also looking at him.

"I'm all right," said Harry, "I - I just couldn't sleep last night, that's all."

Harry had been hoping Professor Flynn would be overseeing the Potions exam, but when he entered the dungeon together with the rest of the class, he saw Snape there instead. Neville looked even more dismayed than Harry. His round face was rather pale, but there was also a determined expression on it. He was evidently going to try to do his best for Jeanne.

Each student was given a cage containing a large bullfrog; they were to prepare a potion that would make the bullfrog sing like a bird.

Snape seemed to be going all out to frighten Neville. He would stand next to Neville's table, his eyes glittering, watching his every move. Neville was trembling, but with an effort he somehow managed to concentrate on what he was doing.

Finally, time was up.

"Stop working!" snapped Snape. "I will now test each of your solutions. Longbottom, we will leave you to the last, in case you are planning to provide us with similar entertainment as you did last year."

Neville went red, and stared worriedly at his cauldron. Draco Malfoy gave a sly smile.

Snape went around, a scowl on his face, testing each student's solution. Harry was relieved when his bullfrog gave a small whistle.

At last, everyone had been tested except Neville. Snape, his face looking more menacing than ever, drew some of Neville's solution into a dropper, and squirted a few drops onto Neville's bullfrog. The rest of the class all gathered round to watch, holding their breath.

The bullfrog blinked and looked around. Neville watched anxiously.

The seconds ticked past. The bullfrog gulped, but didn't make a sound.

Snape's lips curled into a sneering smile. He squirted a few more drops onto the bullfrog.

Neville gazed at the bullfrog, his eyes bulging with emotion, as if pleading with it to sing. The bullfrog just sat there, solemnly blinking its eyes. Then it looked at Neville, and gave a loud croak.

"Well, Longbottom," said Snape at last, a triumphant gleam in his eyes, "your solution does not appear to work. It looks as though I will have to fail you again this year."

Neville sat staring in front of him, as if he couldn't believe what was happening to him. The other students drifted back to their places to clean up, the Gryffindors

casting sympathetic glances at Neville, and the Slytherins muttering sly comments among themselves.

Snape gathered up his books and strode toward the door. He had almost reached it, when Neville suddenly squeaked, "STOP!"

Snape wheeled around, his eyes glittering menacingly.

"What did you say, Longbottom?"

Neville was standing up. Shaking like a leaf, he pointed at his bullfrog.

"S-sir, h-h-he made a s-sound!" he stuttered.

Snape advanced slowly back toward Neville, his eyes glinting dangerously. Harry and the others stood where they were, watching Neville in silence.

Neville gulped, and stared at the bullfrog. The bullfrog also gulped, and stared back at him.

And then, it opened its mouth and began to sing. Not one note, not two, but a long, haunting, lilting melody, as clear as any nightingale might sing on a moonlit night.

The class listened, spellbound. Snape was staring at the bullfrog in disbelief. Neville stood there, transfixed, his eyes wide in astonishment.

The bullfrog sang for at least five minutes. Then it stopped, blinked again, and gave a small belch.

Neville looked at it, then turned to look at Snape, his face anxious.

Snape returned his gaze, his face expressionless. Finally, he spoke.

"Well, it looks as if Miss Graham's efforts have paid off at last, Longbottom," he said in his cold voice. "She will be pleased. Perhaps there is hope for you, after all."

And then he turned, and strode out of the room, his robes billowing behind him.

The minute he disappeared, the room erupted into loud cheers. The Gryffindors all crowded around Neville, hugging and shouting and laughing in delight. As for Neville, he just sat there, his face red, a few tears of joy rolling down his cheeks.

"Won't Jeanne be glad," he said, wiping the tears away.

Ron and Hermione were speechless when Harry told them about what had happened the night before.

"It can't be true," said Ron. "You must have heard wrongly, Harry. It's impossible; Jeanne wouldn't do such a thing."

"I didn't hear wrongly!" Harry insisted. "It wasn't just one sentence; it was several sentences, all talking about killing. I tell you, Jeanne's changed...she's not in her right mind any more; she acted really strangely, with Lupin, last night."

Hermione seemed to be thinking.

"It doesn't make sense, Harry," she said, frowning slightly. "If Jeanne wanted to kill Professor Lupin, she wouldn't have had to wait until tonight to do it. She could have done it any time during the year."

"That's right," said Ron, "and say we do manage to stop her tonight - what then? She's sure to try again, anyway."

Harry could feel his heart sinking. He hadn't thought of all this.

"I don't know," he said. "I only know what I heard last night. She said everything would be over by tonight, and the way she was looking at that bottle, I'm quite sure she intends to poison him."

Hermione was still thinking.

"All right," she said at last, "we'll just worry about tonight first, then. Here's what we can do : she probably won't start moving till evening comes. We'll keep an eye on her whereabouts till around just before dinner or so, using the Marauder's Map. Then we'll try and get near her. Once no one's around, we can do the full body-bind on her. We'll release her after tonight, when Professor Lupin's been cured."

"Hermione, you're a genius!" said Harry, grinning.

So that was what they did. The Map showed that Jeanne was staying closeted in her room for most of the afternoon. At six-thirty, she was still inside.

"All right," said Harry, "Let's go do the body-bind on her now."

Unfortunately, they met Filch on the way to Jeanne's room. Filch had borne a grudge against Harry ever since Harry had seen the Kwikspell letter on his desk, and he had adopted the habit of taking the smallest excuse to scold him. He now lectured them for half an hour about how they hadn't cleaned the Potions classroom properly after the memorable incident with Trevor the Toad.

By the time Filch let them go, it was dinner time. They started hurrying to Jeanne's room, but Professor McGonagall, who was passing by, saw them.

"Potter! Weasley!" she said sharply, "Why aren't you in the Great Hall? It's time for dinner."

"We're - we're just going to see Miss Graham for a few minutes," Hermione said, trying to look innocent.

"Miss Graham is not in her room," said Professor McGonagall. "I just saw her near the Gryffindor common room."

Harry was dismayed. Jeanne must have left her room while Filch had been lecturing them.

"Come along to dinner," said Professor McGonagall, "you can see Miss Graham later."

Harry was in an agony throughout dinner; he couldn't eat anything. Hermione and Ron looked rather worriedly at him. They didn't seem too anxious themselves, and he had a feeling they still only half-believed his story. Professor Lupin wasn't at the staff table during dinner, and neither was Jeanne, or Snape, or Marcus Flynn. Harry began to worry that Lupin had already been murdered.

They got away from the dinner table as fast as they could, and checked the Map. To Harry's dismay, Jeanne was now in Snape's office, together with Snape and Flynn.

"That's not good," said Harry, a sinking feeling in his stomach. "She must be hanging around there, waiting to pour the poison into the potion when they're not looking."

"I know!" said Hermione, "We'll go to Snape's office, and say we saw Jeanne entering it, and that we want to see her for a minute. Once we get her out of his office, we'll do the body-bind on her."

So Harry tucked the Map into his robes, and they made their way down to the dungeons, where Snape's office was, and knocked nervously on the door. Professor Flynn opened it.

"Harry?" he said, giving them his childlike stare. "What do you want?"

"We'd like to see Jeanne for a moment," said Harry.

Flynn looked surprised.

"Jeanne?" he said, "But she isn't here!"

Harry was nonplussed; he hadn't been expecting this answer. Was Flynn hiding Jeanne? He looked at Hermione and Ron.

Hermione stepped into the breach.

"But - but -" she said, "- we saw her coming in here!"

"What's this all about?" Snape was now at the door as well.

"We - we saw Miss Graham entering this room, sir," said Hermione. "We'd like to have a word with her."

Snape frowned at them, his eyes glittering malevolently.

"Miss Graham is not in this room," he said, coldly.

"That's impossible!" said Harry, "We saw her go in!"

Flynn was now looking at them in a perplexed fashion; he looked like a small boy who was lost. Snape, however, gave them a twisted smile.

"Come and see for yourself!" he said, standing aside.

They entered the office. The atmosphere inside was as threatening as it had ever been: the flickering fire threw writhing shadows onto the walls, which were still lined with

jars of slimy things. A smoking cauldron lay on the long table at one end of the room; Harry assumed it contained the potion for Lupin. There was no sign of Jeanne.

They looked at each other in astonishment. Flynn was still wearing his perplexed expression, watching them, but Snape's mouth had now twisted into a sneering smile.

"Did I not tell you?" he said, his eyes glittering creepily in the firelight, "Miss Graham is not present in this room."

Feeling rather foolish, Harry and the others mumbled an apology and left the room.

"I don't get it," said Ron, "the Map clearly showed she was there - unless, she left while we were coming here."

"I don't think so," said Hermione, "or Professor Flynn would have told us."

Harry took the Map out again. It showed that Jeanne was still in Snape's office!

"It's impossible," said Ron, glaring at the Map.

Harry decided he'd better tell them.

"I didn't tell you before," he said, "but I've been noticing the Map behaving rather weirdly at times. There were a few times I wanted to see Jeanne, so I used the Map to find out where she was, and she didn't show up on it at all."

They looked at each other.

"Now what?" said Ron.

"I don't know," said Harry, feeling rather desperate. It was almost half-past eight, and they were running out of time.

Hermione was thinking again.

"We can use the Invisibility Cloak, and hide in the Astronomy Tower," she said. "Then when Snape brings the potion in, we can knock the goblet over, and make it look like an accident. That should take care of the poison. Snape will probably come back here and get another gobletful."

"You're not thinking clearly, Hermione," said Harry. "What if Jeanne's already poisoned the entire cauldron?"

They looked at each other. Harry was beginning to feel panicky; it was getting later and later.

"Let's just go get the Cloak first," Ron said at last. "Then we can continue thinking."

They went up to the bedroom. Harry looked in his trunk, but the Invisibility Cloak wasn't there.

"I - I can't find it!" he said, in dismay. He began to take everything out of the trunk, till it was almost empty.

"Jeanne's taken it!" he said angrily. "Professor McGonagall saw her near the common room. She must have taken it while Filch was lecturing us."

"But that can't be," said Hermione. "She doesn't know the password."

"She doesn't need the password," said Harry, impatiently. "She probably transformed into a bird and flew in the bedroom window."

He began to throw everything back into the trunk. Something on the floor caught Ron's eye.

"What's this?" he said, picking it up.

Harry and Hermione came over to look.

"It's a cassette tape," said Harry, puzzled. "But - who would use that inside Hogwarts?"

"What does it do?" asked Ron, fascinated; but Hermione had seen something else.

"There's a note inside," she said, opening the cassette case.

Harry unfolded the note, and recognised Jeanne's writing.

"You must listen to this by tonight," he read.

"That proves it," said Ron, "Jeanne's taken your Cloak."

There wasn't any time left; Harry made up his mind.

"I'm going to the Astronomy Tower," he said. "I'll go alone. If all of us go, it'll be easier for someone to spot us. You people can take the tape and go look for a cassette player. Look in Jeanne's room, or Flitwick's office - Jeanne told me Flitwick knows how to charm electronic stuff so that they work inside Hogwarts."

Hermione looked frightened.

"But what are you going to do there, Harry?" she asked, anxiously. "You don't have the Cloak, and they'll see you."

"If I go now, I can find a place to hide," said Harry, determinedly. "I'll worry about what I'm going to do later."

He was about to leave, when something glittering in his trunk caught his eye; it was the bottle of stardust which the mirror in the cave had given him. He snatched it up and tucked it inside his robes, and then sprinted off toward the Astronomy Tower.

"If Jeanne really succeeds in poisoning Lupin, the dust might come in useful," he thought to himself as he ran.

There was no one in the room when he arrived. He looked around; the room was a small one. There was a large cage by the window, with chains and manacles inside. The window next to the cage was covered with a thick cloth. There was a table in the middle of the room.

Harry suddenly heard footsteps approaching. In a panic, he ran over to a cupboard at one end of the room, which was the only place he could hide. But before he reached it, Professor Flynn had entered the room.

"Harry!" he said, "What are you doing here?"

Harry looked at him, trying to think of an excuse. For some reason, Flynn looked different; the childlike expression on his face was gone. He walked up to Harry, looking almost as menacing as Snape.

He stared at Harry for a while. Harry was still racking his brain for an excuse, and trying not to look guilty.

At last, Flynn spoke.

"You've come to see tonight's show, haven't you?" he said softly. Something about his voice made Harry's hair stand on end. "You must have found out about my little plan..."

Harry backed away. "He's in it, together with Jeanne!" he thought in alarm. He reached into his robes for his wand, but Flynn was faster. Whipping out his wand, he strode forward, and tapped Harry on the head. Harry fell to the floor, finding himself unable to move.

"I don't want to disappoint you," said Flynn, in the same soft, cold voice. He waved his wand, and the cupboard doors flew open. Another wave, and Harry found himself sitting inside the cupboard. The cupboard doors closed on him, leaving him in darkness.

"Don't worry, Harry," said Flynn, "I'll give you a good view."

Harry heard him tap the cupboard with his wand, and suddenly, the cupboard disappeared, and he could see the entire room.

Flynn smiled at him, no longer childlike. "The cupboard's still there, Harry. You can see out, but everyone else who comes into this room is only going to see a cupboard with its doors shut. Enjoy the show, because I'm going to finish you off when it's over."

He stopped speaking then, because footsteps were approaching. The door opened, and Snape came in, holding a goblet. Harry looked at Flynn; the childlike expression was back on his face.

Snape walked over to the table, still holding the goblet. Flynn went over to talk to him.

A slight noise attracted Harry's attention. He looked to the left, in the direction from where it came. There was a large basket in the corner of the room, and a goblet, identical to the one Snape was holding, had suddenly appeared next to it. The basket conveniently blocked the goblet from the view of anyone standing in the middle of the room.

Harry stared at the goblet.

"It's Jeanne," he thought, his heart sinking. "She's wearing the Cloak. She must have been in Snape's office all along, wearing it. No wonder we couldn't see her."

Jeanne seemed to be doing something. Harry heard her give a soft, sharp cry, as if in pain. Then, to his horror, he saw something red being poured into the goblet.

"She's poisoning the potion," he thought, feeling sick. He tried desperately to move, but couldn't.

The potion in the goblet had now changed to a pale golden colour.

"That's what she was doing in Snape's office," thought Harry. "She must have doctored Snape's potion to make it the same colour as her own, and been waiting to see what kind of goblet he was going to use, so that she could get an identical one."

Jeanne seemed to be doing something else now; Harry heard her catch her breath at one point. Then, the goblet disappeared. She must have picked it up again.

Harry looked at Snape. He was still holding his own goblet.

"Don't put it down," Harry thought desperately. "Please, don't put the goblet down!"

Snape did not seem about to put the goblet down. He stood there, holding it, and talking to Flynn.

Then, all of a sudden, he quickly set the goblet down on the table, and started sneezing. Flynn was startled, and stood watching him. Harry watched the goblet on the table. For a split second, there were two goblets as Jeanne placed her own on the table. Then, Snape's goblet was gone.

Snape had finished sneezing. He brought his handkerchief out, and blew his hooked nose.

"...dust in the room..." Harry heard him mutter through the handkerchief.

Harry was in an agony. Lupin's going to be poisoned in front of me, and I can't do anything about it, he thought.

He heard approaching footsteps again, and Professor Lupin came in. There was a quiet, resigned look on his face. He nodded at the others, but did not join them. Instead, he walked over to the cage and stood next to it, staring at the floor.

Before long, Professors Flitwick and McGonagall came in, together with Dumbledore, all with sober expressions on their faces. Dumbledore looked at Lupin.

"Are you sure you want to do this, Remus?" he asked quietly.

Lupin looked at Dumbledore, then nodded, a set expression on his face. Marcus Flynn gave a childlike smile.

Dumbledore sighed.

"Very well," he said, looking at Flitwick and Professor McGonagall, "let us begin."

Lupin stepped inside the cage. Dumbledore waved his wand, and the manacles flew up, and closed over Lupin's wrists and ankles.

Flitwick was next to the window. "Ready, Remus?" he asked.

Lupin nodded. Flitwick tore the cloth away from the window.

Bright moonlight shone in. Lupin went rigid, then began to shake; his shoulders were hunching... fur was growing on his skin...

Harry was watching in horror. The werewolf raised its muzzle and snarled, and thrashed about in the cage; but the manacles held.

The others had taken out their wands. At Dumbledore's signal, they pointed their wands at the werewolf. Beams of bright light shot out at it, and it suddenly stopped snarling, and seemed frozen in midair, its jaws apart.

"Now, Severus!" Harry heard Dumbledore say sharply.

Snape walked over to the cage, and reaching between the bars, poured the potion down the werewolf's throat.

The others lowered their wands, and the werewolf fell back to the ground, snarling even more ferociously than ever. It thrashed about violently, foam flying from its jaws.

There was a sudden pounding on the door. It flew open, and Hermione, Ron and Neville came bursting in. Hermione was holding a cassette tape player. Behind them came a stranger, a tall wizard with a long, white beard and a serious face.

"Stop!" screamed Hermione, over the werewolf's snarls. "You have to stop!-"

"Miss Granger!" said Professor McGonagall sharply, "what are you doing here?"

Hermione pointed at Flynn.

"He's trying to kill Professor Lupin!" she screamed.

Flynn was staring at the strange wizard. His face had suddenly turned very pale, and the childlike expression was gone. Dumbledore was also looking at him in surprise.

"Elfrid!" he exclaimed.

Suddenly, the werewolf stopped snarling. It lowered its head, and looked at them. Then it drooped its head, and whimpered.

There was a dead silence in the room. Every eye was on the wolf. It walked around the cage, the chains clinking, then turned back to look at them, and whimpered again.

Professor McGonagall was the first to break the silence.

"It - it didn't work!" she said in a hushed voice, staring at the wolf. "He's become an ordinary wolf."

Flynn was staring at the strange wizard again, a curious expression on his face. Dumbledore came over to the door.

"Elfrid!" he said, taking the wizard's hand. "But how -? We thought you were dead!"

"Everyone thought so," said the wizard, "Especially Marcus. Didn't you, Marcus?" He looked over at Flynn, who was still looking pale.

The wolf whimpered in its cage again. Flitwick turned to look at it.

"Look!" he squeaked excitedly.

The wolf was transforming. Its legs were changing shape...its fur was disappearing...

Harry watched in disbelief. Professor Lupin was lying in the cage, a dazed expression on his face, the manacles still binding his arms and legs. Moonlight was shining through the window onto him. The potion had cured him!

Dumbledore gave an exclamation, and waved his wand. The manacles fell off, and the cage door flew open. He hurried over to help Lupin up.

Hermione's eyes were wide.

"But - but - it can't be," she whispered. "The tape - "

Dumbledore helped Lupin to a chair. Colour had returned to Flynn's face, and he was now beaming away.

"You see?" he said, his expression childlike again, "The potion worked."

The strange wizard walked a few steps into the room, his eyes on Flynn.

"Interesting, Marcus," he said. "Where, may I ask, did you get the final ingredient?"

Flynn stared back at him, the childlike expression gone again.

"I found a substitute, uncle," he said.

Snape looked surprised.

"Uncle?" he said, looking at Flynn. "Professor Donahue is your uncle?"

Flynn nodded. Harry thought he saw a peculiar flicker in his eyes as he looked at Professor Donahue.

Dumbledore looked at Donahue. "What final ingredient is this?" he asked.

Donahue sighed, and looked around.

"Where is Jeanne?" he asked.

Lupin, who was still sitting in his chair looking dazed, looked up at this.

Donahue took a letter from his pocket.

"She sent me a letter," he said, "saying I should get here by a quarter past nine."

Harry looked at the others. All of them looked astonished, except Dumbledore.

"She said she wasn't coming," said Flynn.

Snape was looking at Donahue, his eyes glittering.

"Our final ingredient was two leaves of silverblad," he said.

Donahue looked at him in disbelief.

"Impossible!" he said sharply. "That's impossible. The last person we tried silverblad on died within a minute of taking the potion."

Flynn had an innocent expression on his face now.

"It must have been due to the particular individual, uncle," he said. "As you can see, Remus here has been cured."

Dumbledore was looking at Professor Donahue.

"What final ingredient were you talking about, Elfrid?" he asked.

Donahue sighed.

"The ingredient that has been giving me and Miss Graham a headache this entire year, Albus," he said. "We've been trying for months to find a substitute, but to no avail."

Lupin, still seated in the chair, was looking pale.

"What ingredient is this?" he asked.

Donahue appeared to be in no hurry to answer the question.

"The reason only three people have been cured so far," said Donahue, "is that this ingredient is usually impossible to obtain. It has to be added, fresh, just before it is taken by the patient."

Professor McGonagall was beginning to look impatient.

"Professor Donahue, please do not keep us in suspense any longer," she said. "What is this final ingredient?"

Donahue looked at her gravely.

"It is blood, madam," he said quietly. "The blood of someone who is willing to sacrifice his life, for the patient."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

There was a sudden silence in the room. Everyone was looking at Donahue, stunned.

Lupin was now on his feet, looking even paler.

"Jeanne..." he said hoarsely, looking at Dumbledore, "...I've got to find her - "

"Calm yourself, Lupin," said Snape coldly. "The blood has to be added fresh. I assure you, Miss Graham has not been anywhere near the potion in the last hour."

Flitwick was looking confused.

"But - that's impossible!" he said, looking at Donahue, "how could you have discovered such an ingredient? How can anyone even think of adding something like that?"

Professor Donahue gave a slightly bitter smile.

"Completely by accident," he said. "We've suspected, for many years, that blood was an important ingredient to be used in the werewolf cure. We tested many varieties - animal blood, then human. One day, we decided to add it fresh, just before the patient took it. The patient's father contributed the blood. However, just after the patient had taken the potion, the father had a heart seizure and died."

He paused. Harry looked at the others; they were all listening intently.

"This patient was the first to be cured. We were excited, of course - despite the father's unfortunate death. At the time, I didn't realise the significance of this death, but my sister - Marcus's mother - did.

"I thought fresh blood was the answer. We tried again, with another patient, but it didn't work. We tried all sources of fresh blood...from the different family members, friends...

"My sister was even more well-versed in this branch of research than I was. She had an added incentive, you see...her husband, Marcus's father, was a werewolf.

"She must have realised the significance of the father's death, because she volunteered to donate her blood for her husband. Just before I was about to give him the potion, she told me to go ahead, and excused herself from the room.

"I gave the potion to my brother-in-law, and he was cured. We rushed to find my sister and tell her the good news - only to find her dead on her bed. She had stabbed herself."

Donahue looked around. Most of those in the room were looking rather horrified.

"My sister left a long letter," said Donahue, "explaining about the cure. It has to be fresh blood from a person who then dies before or within a short period of the patient taking the potion. She'd tried blood from sick people who died shortly after, and who were not related to the patient, but it didn't work. She then tried another experiment with a patient whose mother said she was willing to take her life to cure her child. They tried the mother's blood, but so long as the mother was alive, it didn't work. They then tried again. This time, the mother went upstairs and hung herself.

"The patient recovered, but when she found out what her mother had done, she committed suicide. My sister blamed herself for conducting the experiment. She felt so bad she wanted to kill herself. That was why she gave up her life, for her husband.

"Marcus was about seventeen at the time. I will never forget his face when we opened the bedroom door and he saw his mother lying there."

Harry looked at Flynn. He seemed to be shaking slightly, and his face was a peculiar green colour.

Donahue looked sadly at him.

"As time went by, I thought he had got over his mother's death. He went into the same line as I did, and took up the same field of research. However, I have reason to believe now that he never forgot what happened that day. He blamed me for what had happened; didn't you, Marcus?"

Harry was startled. Flynn was staring at Donahue with absolute hatred in his eyes.

"You tried to kill me, didn't you, Marcus?" said Donahue. "But Jeanne found out about it. I didn't believe her at first, but she came that night and helped me get away, just in time."

Flynn's eyes narrowed.

"Prove it!" he hissed.

Hermione, who had sat down on a chair to listen to Donahue, jumped up.

"We can!" she cried. "We have the tape! Listen!"

She bent over the cassette player, rewound the tape, and then pressed the play button.

Harry looked at Flynn. He was now pale, staring at the cassette player, and trembling slightly. Everyone else was listening with bated breath.

The tape crackled a bit, then a voice was heard. It was Flynn's.

"...everything has been going like clockwork...we successfully disposed of Donahue in March - there weren't even any remnants of him to be found; and in one month's time, I'll have my revenge on Lupin at last."

Lupin turned to look at Flynn in surprise. Flynn suddenly looked very tense, and seemed about to reach for his wand; but Dumbledore was faster.

"This room is getting a bit crowded, Marcus," he said, lifting his wand, "why don't you sit in the cage and give us a little more space."

He pointed his wand at Flynn, and he flew into the air, his wand falling from his hand. He landed in the cage, and the manacles snapped onto his wrists and legs.

The tape was still playing.

"...but what if something goes wrong?" Another rough-sounding voice said.

"Nothing will go wrong," said Flynn's voice. "I've got the girl in my pocket. Lupin is in such a suicidal state of mind, he's sure to agree to take the potion. After that, I can dump the bitch."

"What if someone finds out?" said the rough voice. "The other researcher - Snape - "

"He doesn't know a thing," said Flynn's voice. "He just follows all my instructions. He wouldn't care anyway, he hates Lupin as much as I do."

The tape crackled again, and Hermione pressed the stop button.

Lupin was frowning and looking at Flynn. Donahue, seeing this, came forward.

"We meet at last," he said, taking Lupin's hand and shaking it. "Jeanne has told me a lot about you. Such a serious young lady, but her face lights up every time she talks about you."

Lupin looked confused.

"I don't understand - " he began.

"Jeanne has been working with me to find a cure for you, Remus," said Donahue. "She found out that Albus knew me, and asked him to introduce me to her last year. She spent her one month's leave with me, during the school holidays, finding out about my research."

Lupin looked amazed.

"She kept it a secret," said Donahue. "She didn't even tell Albus, did she?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "After the introduction, she never said anything more to me."

"When school reopened, she continued her work in her room," Donahue went on. "We corresponded, and occasionally when we had to meet to compare notes, she would transform and fly to Edinburgh to see me."

Harry was dumbfounded. So the Marauder's Map hadn't been faulty after all; Jeanne really hadn't been in Hogwarts.

"When Professor Snape asked for someone to help him with the research, I recommended Marcus," continued Donahue. "I was collaborating with them all the while. But Jeanne didn't trust Marcus from the start, even though he was my nephew. She never told me why. She kept her research a secret from him and Professor Snape, and asked me not to tell them, either."

Lupin was looking more amazed than ever. Snape was watching Donahue with narrowed eyes.

"Jeanne overheard Marcus talking to himself one day, and realised he was up to no good. After that, she had him trailed. She asked some of her animal friends to follow him everywhere, and tell her what he had been saying. One of them was a small owl, I believe."

Ron looked startled.

"That's how she found out Marcus was planning to kill me," said Donahue. "And planning to kill Remus, too. Marcus hated your father, Remus," - turning to Lupin - "you see, my sister and I knew your parents. They were naturally interested in our research, because their son was a werewolf, and that is how they came to know us. My sister had written the letter to me explaining about the cure much earlier, but she accidentally left the letter at your parents' house, so she sent your father a message and asked if he could deliver it to us the day we gave the potion to her husband.

"Your father arrived just before the experiment and gave the letter to my sister. He was in a hurry that day, so he just delivered the letter and left. He didn't know the contents of the letter, but Marcus believed he did, and that he allowed my sister to take her life."

Lupin was looking pale.

"Your parents knew about the cure, Remus," Donahue told him. "Both were willing to sacrifice themselves for you, but neither would allow the other to do it. Marcus hated them; when they died in that accident, he found he had lost his chance for revenge, so his target became you, instead."

Harry looked at Flynn. He looked like a totally different person now, almost a stranger. The innocent and childlike expression was gone, and he was staring at both Donahue and Lupin with absolute hatred.

Lupin was shaking his head in disbelief.

"Jeanne never told me any of this," he said.

"She couldn't tell you, because then you would have found out about the final ingredient," said Donahue. "Because of the horrific nature of the cure, the results were never published. No one knew a cure had actually been found, except the patients who recovered, and their family, and those working in the field, and these were all sworn to secrecy. Your parents found out because Marcus confronted your father the next day. It was unfortunate" - he looked regretful - "that my sister asked your father to deliver the letter in person. She must have been afraid that, if it was returned by owl, someone else might intercept it."

He looked at Lupin. "Jeanne would not have told you, anyway, Remus; she didn't want you to know. If you found out what the final ingredient was, she was sure you'd stop her from continuing her research."

Lupin was silent. Donahue looked at him a moment longer, then continued.

"She couldn't expose Marcus without any proof," he said, "so she trailed him, hoping to tape his conversation. But at Hogwarts, no one knew of his plans...it was not until she followed him to Edinburgh that she managed to tape what she wanted."

It all fits together now, thought Harry, her weird behaviour, that time during full moon when both she and Flynn had been in Edinburgh...

"When she obtained the tape, I was in hiding," said Donahue. "She came to see me the next day. She was upset because she couldn't make the tonic for you that month, Remus. It would have interfered with the potion you took today."

"She told me she'd finally obtained evidence against Marcus. I assumed she would expose him soon...when she sent me this letter, I thought she must have done it. But she isn't here...where is she?"

No one answered. Obviously, no one knew where Jeanne was. Lupin looked rather pale, and he had a worried frown on his face.

Finally, Professor McGonagall spoke up.

"One more thing also remains unsolved," she said. "If Severus here prepared the wrong potion, how is it that Remus has been cured?"

A murmur went around at this. Everyone looked at Donahue, as if waiting for the answer.

He shook his head.

"I don't know..." he said, looking thoughtfully at Lupin.

Something cold crept into Harry's heart suddenly. Jeanne...! He had been so caught up with Donahue's story that the implications of what he'd seen hadn't hit him. She'd poured her own blood into the goblet, and switched it with Snape's...she was going to kill herself. She must have left the room when the others had arrived...

Harry tried desperately to move, but to no avail. He knew it was too late by now...if Lupin had recovered, Jeanne must already be dead.

Hermione suddenly realised something.

"Harry!" she cried. "Where's Harry? He's supposed to be here, he came here before we did..."

Flynn started slightly, and involuntarily looked at the cupboard. Lupin, noticing this, said, "There's something in the cupboard, is there, Marcus?"

He strode over to the cupboard and tapped it with his wand. The doors flew open.

"Harry!" screamed Hermione. "What happened?"

"Flynn did the body-bind on him, Hermione," said Lupin, bending down and tapping Harry with the wand. Harry suddenly found he could feel his arms and legs again.

Lupin helped him out of the cupboard.

"Are you all righ-"

He broke off suddenly. Harry looked up.

Lupin had gone deathly pale. He was staring at something in the corner of the room, behind Harry.

Harry turned to look. There, in the corner, next to the basket, was a small puddle of blood. It was growing; a thin trickle of blood was falling out of thin air, feeding the puddle.

Lupin crossed over to the corner in two strides. Bending down, he pulled the Invisibility Cloak off Jeanne's still form.

She was lying curled up in the corner, a small knife together with Snape's goblet and the green bottle in her lap. She had tied a handkerchief around the wound in her arm, but the blood was still seeping out slowly, feeding the puddle on the floor.

Everyone was standing as if frozen, watching in shock. Lupin knelt down next to Jeanne. He felt her pulse, then without a word, gently took her into his arms, and held her close to him.

At this, Neville burst into tears. Snape came forward, and picked up the green bottle, which had tumbled to the floor together with the knife and goblet.

"Poison," he said grimly, looking at it.

Neville was still sobbing. Professor McGonagall was shaking slightly, and Hermione had tears in her eyes. Dumbledore, Flitwick and Ron looked sober.

Marcus Flynn, however, laughed.

"Serves the little bitch right," he sneered. "She's done a better job than I could ever have. You'll never forget this, will you, Lupin - "

Lupin had put Jeanne down, and turned to face Flynn. There was a murderous look on his face which Harry had never seen before. He was pulling his wand out.

"By God, Flynn, I'll kill you for this," he said softly.

"Remus! No!" said Dumbledore, sharply.

But to Harry's astonishment, it was Snape who stepped in front of Lupin, and placed a hand on his arm, so that the wand was lowered.

"Put the wand down, Lupin," said Snape, in a soft, cold voice. "You can't blame Flynn for this. Blame yourself, instead."

He looked at Lupin, his eyes glittering strangely.

"You have only yourself to blame," he repeated, in the same soft, cold voice. "You had her - she was yours, but you drove her away."

Snape's eyes narrowed, and his thin lips were curled into a sneer.

"Do you know how much she loved you, Lupin?" he said softly. "Tell me, what did she ever do that wasn't for you? Do you think all those hours she spent working on potions were for Longbottom, or to help me?"

Lupin was looking at him, his face pale.

"She was only interested in one potion, right from the beginning," whispered Snape. "The one you just drank."

He stopped, his eyes narrowing, then continued, still in a whisper.

"Do you think all that time spent with Madam Pomfrey was to learn healing for other people? You know she was only interested in healing one person - you. Tell me, how many hours did she spend watching over you, every full moon?"

"And that imbecile, Flynn, do you think she cared an iota for him? Why did she put up with him, with his insipid company, with all the tedious cocktail parties and balls, which she found an absolute bore - why did she do it? Because Donahue was gone - Donahue was in hiding, and everyone thought he was dead, and the precious funds for her research had been cut off. She needed the money desperately, because the ingredients were expensive, and she didn't have much time, to prepare the potion for you."

Snape's skin had gone even more sallow than usual, and he looked at Lupin with as much loathing as Marcus Flynn had.

"Blame yourself, Lupin," he whispered. "You drove her to this. You had her, but you let her go."

"That will do, Severus!" said Dumbledore sharply. "I believe we can dispense with your presence here. Kindly await us below stairs."

Snape looked at Dumbledore, his lip curling. Professors McGonagall and Flitwick went up to him and firmly started leading him off. At the door, Snape shrugged their hands off, and turned around and looked at Lupin, one more time.

Lupin returned Snape's gaze, his face still pale.

"You cared for her too, didn't you, Severus," he said quietly, with a hint of wonder in his eyes. "And I thought - "

Snape's face had a twisted, bitter expression on it. "- that I was doing it to spite you?" His eyes narrowed, and he seemed about to say more, then thought better of it, and left.

"Minerva, could you inform Madam Pomfrey of this," Dumbledore said quietly to Professor McGonagall, as she turned to follow Snape. She gave a quick nod, and left.

Professor Flitwick was looking like a dim copy of his usual cheerful self.

"I'll inform the Ministry, Albus," he said, glancing at Flynn.

Dumbledore nodded, and he hurried out.

Lupin had knelt down and was holding Jeanne again. Dumbledore went over to him, and gently said, "let me look at her, Remus."

He examined Jeanne for a while, then shook his head sadly, indicating there was nothing he could do. He raised his wand, and was beginning to conjure a stretcher, when Lupin said quietly,

"Headmaster, let me do it."

He picked Jeanne up as if she were weightless, and carried her out of the room. Harry glanced at his face as he passed, and wished he hadn't.

"You may as well follow him to the hospital wing, Harry," said Dumbledore quietly, looking after Lupin with concern in his eyes. "Elfrid and I will wait here with Marcus till the Azkaban guards arrive."

Flynn heard this, and went deathly pale.

Harry, Ron, Hermione and Neville set off after Lupin. Harry was silent; he was feeling terrible - he had totally misjudged Jeanne. Those things he'd said to her - he could never take them back now. He kept seeing her face that night when she'd begged him for the Cloak.

"Jeanne planned everything," Ron said, looking slightly shaken. "She somehow managed to get hold of a cassette player that would work inside Hogwarts, and gave it to Neville, and told him not to give it to us till ten past nine; she didn't want us to arrive there too soon, and stop Lupin from taking the potion."

Neville was still crying. Hermione put a comforting arm around his shoulders.

"I n-never got t-to tell her about the P-Potions exam," he sobbed.

"She framed Flynn too," said Ron. "She got Donahue to come a bit later as well, so that he wouldn't interfere with Lupin taking the potion either. We met him trying to find his way to the Tower."

Harry remained silent. He was feeling worse and worse.

"Don't feel bad, Harry," said Hermione, looking anxiously at him, and trying to think of something to comfort him. "Jeanne understood why you were angry with her. If you hadn't cared so much about her, you wouldn't have been so angry."

Harry felt even worse.

Lupin had reached the hospital wing. Madam Pomfrey was at the door, her face sober.

"Bring her in, Remus," she said gently, and let him in. She refused, however, to let Harry and the others go in.

"He needs to be alone with her for a while," she said firmly, and shut the door in their faces.

They stood outside, feeling at a loss. Harry walked to a nearby window and gazed out unseeingly. His mind felt numb.

Neville was still sobbing slightly. Hermione, however, suddenly remembered something.

"Harry?" she said timidly, coming up to the window, "I forgot...Jeanne left a letter for you. We found it in her room when we went to look for the cassette player there."

Harry found his fingers shaking slightly as he tore the envelope open.

Dear Harry,

I'm sorry I had to take your Cloak. I know you're very angry with me. I still can't tell you why I need it, but please believe that what I did was for the best.

I won't see you again after this, but I would like to thank you for the friendship that we had; it was very special to me. Thank you for coming to Kamchatka and helping me escape from Deorg.

Please thank Hagrid, Neville, Ron and Hermione for their friendship as well. I have been very happy here at Hogwarts, these past two years.

I wish I had something to leave you, but I don't. Even the stardust was a present from the mirror, and not from me. However, I'm glad I at least played a part in obtaining it for you. I hope it will bring you happiness, one day. Remember me, when that time comes.

Jeanne

Hermione and the others were standing around, looking worriedly at him. Neville had finally stopped crying.

Harry looked at them. His mind still felt numb.

"She said 'I won't see you again'," he said, staring at the letter. "She didn't mean to kill herself inside that room. She was going to leave and do it elsewhere, where nobody would find her, so that no one would ever know what had happened to her. But she couldn't get out - the window was covered and she couldn't get to the door, they'd closed it too fast. She had no choice, because she had to do it before Lupin took the potion."

The others didn't seem to know what to say; they just stood there, looking at him.

"She said to thank all of you for your friendship," said Harry, and then stopped, because there was a lump in his throat.

He turned around and looked out of the window again, feeling sick at heart. As he leaned against the sill, he felt some hard object inside his robes poking at him.

He felt inside his robes, and brought the object out. It was the bottle of stardust. He looked at it. His mind felt so numb now that for a moment he couldn't remember what he was looking at.

Then, the words came back to him:

"One second chance will this stardust give..."

"The dust!" he whispered, his heart beating fast. "We can use the stardust on her!"

He wheeled around, and without waiting for the others, ran over to the hospital wing door and hammered on it.

Madam Pomfrey looked angry when she opened the door. Harry was so excited that he couldn't wait to explain anything to her. He merely pushed past her, and ran inside.

"What! - " she gasped, and then he could hear Hermione at the door too, explaining about the dust to her.

Jeanne's body was lying on a bed at the far end of the wing. Professor Lupin was sitting silently next to her, holding her hands in his, and staring into space. He looked up, startled, when Harry came dashing up.

"Sir - " Harry panted, holding the bottle up, "- we can use this on her. The mirror in the cave gave it to me."

Lupin's mind appeared to have gone numb too, because it took him a while to register what Harry was saying.

"The stardust?" he whispered, taking the bottle in his hand. He stared at it a while. "Yes, I remember her telling me about it," he said slowly.

He looked at Harry.

"Are you sure...?" he asked.

Suddenly, Harry wasn't sure. These two years, he had been wildly hoping the stardust might one day bring his parents back to life, however remote the chance might be. The image of the photograph that Jeanne had given him, of him together with his father and mother, came into his mind...

He looked at Lupin. The lines on his young face seemed more obvious than usual, and there seemed to be more grey hair mingling with the light brown. He was holding the bottle with one hand, but the other hand was still clasping Jeanne's.

Harry made up his mind.

"I'm sure," he said.

Lupin looked at him, then slowly opened the bottle, and sprinkled the stardust onto Jeanne's body.

The dust sparkled as it lay on her body, then suddenly flared up brightly for a moment, glowing blue-white. It then shimmered, and became dimmer, and seemed to sink into her, and disappear.

They waited. Lupin was watching tensely. Harry was holding his breath. He was vaguely aware of Madam Pomfrey, together with Hermione and the others, watching from behind.

The minutes ticked past. Jeanne lay there, still as ever.

Harry felt his heart sink. The dust wasn't working; the mirror had merely been playing a shabby trick on him.

Lupin's face had a set expression on it. He suddenly got up, and walked abruptly to the other end of the ward.

Hermione looked stricken.

"I'm sorry, Harry," she whispered.

Harry couldn't bear it. He turned and brushed past the others, and began walking out of the wing.

He could hear them following him. He had reached the door of the wing...

- And then, Madam Pomfrey suddenly called out shrilly.

"Remus! Come here quick!"

Harry felt his heart stop for a moment. He turned around, and saw Lupin darting back toward Jeanne's bed. He heard Madam Pomfrey saying, "she's breathing..."

For a split second, he, Hermione, Ron and Neville stared at each other, wide-eyed. Then, as one, they turned and ran back into the wing.

Jeanne was breathing. Some colour was back in her cheeks. Lupin was staring at her, as if he couldn't believe what he was seeing.

She slowly opened her eyes. She seemed to have difficulty focussing her gaze. She looked at Harry, then Madam Pomfrey, then Neville, Ron and Hermione, as if she couldn't recognize them. Then, she turned her head slightly, and looked at Lupin.

Her eyes widened slightly.

"Remus?" she whispered.

Lupin was still staring in disbelief.

She looked at him, as if trying to remember something.

"The potion..." she whispered at last, "did it work...?"

He looked at her for a moment, then nodded slowly.

She stared at him, as if what she saw hadn't sunk in.

"It worked," she whispered, staring in disbelief. Then, suddenly, she started to cry.

Lupin looked alarmed, and caught hold of her hands.

"Jeanne," he said softly, "It's all right, Jeanne. It's all over."

She couldn't stop crying. It was as if all the tension she'd been carrying the past few months was finally being let out.

Madam Pomfrey turned and looked at Harry and the others.

"She needs to rest," she said, softly but firmly. "Time to leave them alone for a while. Out, out, all of you." She turned back to Lupin. "Let me do it, Remus. If you'll just step aside for a moment..."

Hermione caught Neville and Ron by the arm, and starting leading them out of the wing. Harry stared at Jeanne a moment longer, then turned and slowly followed.

He had almost reached the door of the wing when he heard Lupin calling him.

"Harry!"

He turned around. Lupin was standing behind him, looking at him. He seemed to want to say something, but couldn't find the words. There was a curious light in his face, as if a flame had been kindled within him.

"Thank you, Harry," was all he finally said in the end, but the grateful look that came with it said more than any words could.

Harry suddenly found his throat too tight to speak, so he just nodded. Lupin looked at him for a moment longer, then turned and went back to Jeanne's side. Harry watched him take her hands in his. She had stopped crying, and was now looking quietly at him.

Harry watched them a moment longer, then his vision blurred because there was a sudden wetness in his eyes. He turned, and went quickly from the room.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

It was several days before Harry had a chance to talk to Jeanne. He, Neville, Ron and Hermione, and even Hagrid took to haunting the hospital wing over the next few days, until Madam Pomfrey lost patience with them.

"When she's well enough to see you, we'll send for you," she said crossly. "The dust gave her life back, but traces of poison are still in her blood. It'll take time, to leach it out."

Finally, on the fifth day, Pigwidgeon brought Harry a letter.

"Jeanne says she's well enough to see us," said Harry, reading the letter, "but Madam Pomfrey says only I'm to go. She doesn't want all of us crowding around her."

Neville looked disappointed. Ron was petting Pigwidgeon; he was proud of the part he had played in exposing Marcus Flynn, and had stopped complaining whenever Jeanne used him to carry her letters.

Jeanne was sitting up in bed when Harry saw her. She still looked rather tired and pale, but there was a happy look in her eyes. She smiled when she saw him.

"It's good to see the old you back," said Harry, when he saw her smile.

She reached out, and took one of his hands in hers.

"Thank you for using the stardust on me, Harry," she said. "I'm sorry -"

"It wasn't anything," said Harry, interrupting her. "I'm the one who should say sorry. I'm sorry I said all those awful things...I didn't know..."

She smiled, and there seemed to be tears in her eyes. She gave his hand an affectionate squeeze, then released it.

Harry looked at her. He noticed the wolf pendant, sparkling at her throat.

"You really love him, don't you," he said, looking at her in wonder. "All the stuff you must have gone through..."

She looked more serious now, and gave a small sigh.

"Yes, I went through all of it," she said, "but in the end, it wasn't a thorough cure."

Harry looked at her, startled.

"What?" he said, "but -"

She had a resigned expression on her face.

"The following night, the moon was still full, and he transformed into a wolf again," she said. "The person who donates the blood has to be dead. Bringing me back to life must have interfered with the cure."

Harry stared at her, unable to believe what he was hearing.

"He only transforms into a normal wolf now, though," she said, "so technically he's not really a werewolf any more. Severus won't need to make the Wolfsbane potion for him again. And he doesn't fall as ill after that as he used to, either. I guess in a way I don't mind...I'm so used to him being a wolf during full moon, I think I would rather miss it."

Harry still felt disappointed. After all the heartache Jeanne and Lupin must have gone through, Lupin still hadn't been fully cured.

"I'm sorry I stole your Cloak, Harry," said Jeanne, "but I really needed it. I couldn't have done what I did, that night, without it."

"It's all right," said Harry. "I still wouldn't have lent it to you, though, if I'd known what you wanted it for."

He fell silent, thinking. Jeanne, seeing this, smiled and began examining the bunch of flowers he had brought, which were now sitting in a vase by the bed.

Harry looked at her.

"Jeanne," he said, "Professor Donahue said you didn't trust Flynn from the start. But you only overheard him later in the year. How did you know...?"

"...that he wasn't to be trusted?" she said. "I saw his face when he first saw Remus, at the start of term feast."

She had stopped arranging the flowers, and was now looking at Harry.

"There was a look of absolute hate on it, for a moment," she said. "It made my blood run cold. Later, when the feast was over, I tried to get to know him. I wanted to know if he was reliable. I was the one who persuaded Severus to get a research partner, you see. Severus knew I would be pleased if a cure for Remus could be found; I think that was why he agreed to take up the project in the first place, even though he doesn't like Remus. But I didn't trust him, so I suggested that Dumbledore ask Donahue to recommend a partner, someone who could make sure Severus wouldn't try harming Remus by doctoring the potion.

"At the feast, I found that Marcus wasn't interested in talking to me at all. He'd heard I was just the gamekeeper's assistant, and he didn't think I was worth noticing. It was only later, when he must have found out that Remus and I liked each other, that he started trying to pursue me. He wanted to spite Remus by breaking us up, you see."

Harry was listening intently. A lot of things were becoming clear to him now.

"At first, I thought he was just a shallow and worldly idiot," said Jeanne. "I hung around, trying to find out how the research was going. I would transform into a small

animal, and eavesdrop on all the staff meetings that were held to discuss the progress of the research.

"It became clear to me that Marcus wasn't very interested in the project. Severus was doing all the preparation and testing. Marcus merely suggested what ingredients to use.

"One day, I overheard him muttering to himself, 'Lupin, you'd better watch out!' I became worried. Pigwidgeon was with me at the time, and he volunteered to help me eavesdrop on Flynn. I was afraid he would neglect his duties to Ron, but he was so enthusiastic about helping that I couldn't put him off.

"You can imagine my feelings when I found out what Flynn was really up to. I bitterly regretted the part I played in bringing him here."

She gave a small sigh, and looked pensive.

"I had no proof to expose Flynn. I hoped that Donahue and I would find an alternative cure, so that we wouldn't have to use Flynn's potion. But after Donahue went into hiding, the authorities cut off my research funds, because unlike Severus, I had no qualifications. I hoped Severus and Marcus would call off the project, now that their main collaborator was gone, but Marcus insisted on carrying on.

"I was beginning to panic. After Flynn's attempt on Donahue's life, I knew he was serious about killing Remus. I tried to persuade Remus to change his mind, to let us to be together even though he was a werewolf, and forget about the cure, and call off the project. But he was keen on it; he thought, if it worked, then we could be together at last."

She paused, and shifted to a more comfortable position on the bed.

"I told Remus that Marcus wasn't to be trusted, that he wanted to harm him. But he didn't believe me. He said there was no reason for Flynn to dislike him. I couldn't tell him about Flynn hating his parents, because then I'd have to tell him I'd learnt it from Donahue, and the secret of my research would be out."

She stopped, and looked thoughtfully at her flowers for a moment, then looked at Harry again.

"There were only two things I could do now. The best solution was to find proof of Flynn's plans; but I didn't know if I would succeed.

"The only other choice I had was to break with Remus and go steady with Flynn. There was no other way I could get money. Then I could continue my research, still keeping in touch with Donahue. And I could also buy ingredients for the known cure, so that if all else failed, I could donate my own blood and switch the potions."

She sighed, and lay back on her pillows, looking rather tired.

Harry, though, was thinking of something, and didn't notice her tiredness.

"When you finally obtained the proof, you could have exposed Flynn straight away," he said. "You didn't need to sacrifice yourself."

She sat up again, looking at him.

"Yes, I know," she admitted. "But I was under so much stress that I wasn't thinking very clearly, by that time. I knew I had hurt Remus a lot, by being with Marcus, and I felt he'd never trust me again, even if he found out in the end what I was up to. I felt I had destroyed our relationship, and it was gone forever. The only thing I could do for him now was to help him get cured. Besides, I felt I might one day be killed by Deorg anyway. I'd rather die, helping Remus - since we couldn't be together anyway - than die for nothing at the hands of Deorg."

A movement caught Harry's eye. Professor Lupin was standing behind Jeanne, listening. He now walked to one side of the bed, so that he was standing across the bed from Harry, and looked at her with a grave expression on his face.

Jeanne saw him and went pink.

"How much of what I said did you overhear?" she asked.

"Nearly everything," he said, still looking at her.

She went even pinker. She opened her mouth to say something more, but now Madam Pomfrey had come over as well.

"You've far exceeded your ten minutes, Harry," she said firmly, "Time for you to go...She needs to rest!"

"Hold on a minute, Poppy," said Jeanne, "give me another five minutes. I haven't told Harry the real reason I wanted to see him, today."

Madam Pomfrey looked at her, then sighed and nodded, and walked off.

Harry looked at Jeanne in surprise.

"Harry, what I actually wanted to tell you today," she said, blushing, "is that Remus and I are getting married."

Harry was dumbfounded.

"You are?" he gasped, looking at her and Lupin in astonishment. "When?"

"Next week," said Lupin.

"Next week!" said Harry. "But - but it's the holidays already! Me and the others won't be able to come!"

"It's going to be a very quiet affair, anyway, Harry," said Lupin. "Just the two of us, and the priest, and Dumbledore as witness."

He paused, looked at Jeanne, then back at Harry again. "So many things have happened these last few months, not all of them happy, that we're emotionally exhausted. We just want something simple, without any fuss."

"You can still have something simple, with us there," said Harry, trying to persuade him. "You could hold it this week, before school closes."

Lupin smiled, and shook his head.

"She's not well enough, Harry," he said, glancing at Jeanne, "and Dumbledore won't be free at that time."

"You could hold it next term, when we come back!" said Harry.

Lupin smiled, and shook his head again.

"No, Harry. We don't want to wait that long. We've waited long enough." He stopped, and looked at Jeanne again. "It's only a formality, anyway, - the ceremony; just a piece of parchment. I believe, in our hearts, we were already married a long time ago."

She smiled at him.

Harry didn't see Jeanne again that term, but he did pay Professor Lupin one last visit in his office, on the second last day of the term.

"This is for you and Jeanne, from me and Ron and Hermione," he said, heaving a large package onto Lupin's desk. "We got it in Hogsmeade yesterday...we got permission to go from Professor McGonagall first, of course," he hurriedly added.

Lupin looked speechless with surprise.

Harry racked his brains, trying to remember the words Hermione had been drilling him to say all morning. It had been something very long and flowery, but now he could only recall one line.

"We hope the both of you will be very happy together," he recited.

Lupin was still looking surprised.

"Why, Harry, you shouldn't have!" he said, at last. "We really didn't expect anything..."

He broke off, and examined the gift, still looking surprised.

"Hermione spent the whole night wrapping it," said Harry, watching him. "She and Ron didn't want to come; they seemed to think it was better, if I came alone to give it."

Lupin was smiling now. He looked at Harry.

"Thank you, Harry," he said, "and please thank them as well, too."

Harry felt slightly embarrassed.

"Neville and Hagrid each got something for the both of you, too," he said, "but they said they would give it to Jeanne when they see her."

Lupin lifted the parcel with both hands, as if testing its weight.

"I'll give it to Jeanne to unwrap," he said. "It's heavy...I sincerely hope you didn't go to too much expense..."

"Well - actually we got it at a discount," confessed Harry, going red. "It's a tea-set. I saw Jeanne admiring it, once. Grenivere let us have it at a good price...he was having a closing down sale."

Lupin looked surprised. "He's moving out, is he?"

Harry nodded, and fished out a small package from the depths of his robes.

"He gave this to me, to give to you. Said it's from your grandfather."

Lupin was looking astonished again. He took the package and turned it around in his hands, examining it.

"He didn't tell us what was inside, but said to open it straight away, before you went and bought your own," added Harry. "He - he said your grandfather had already carved the names on it."

Lupin looked thoughtfully at the package, then tore the wrapper off. There was a small box inside, similar to the one that had held the wolf pendant. Lupin opened it, and a look of complete amazement came over his face. Even Harry was too surprised to speak.

The box contained two rings, one smaller than the other. They were silver in colour, and shimmered with starlight. The large one was plain, but the smaller one had a very small gem, like a star, on it. Harry could see that some words were inscribed on the inner surface of each ring.

Lupin was looking completely thunderstruck. He took the rings out and examined them, read the inscriptions, and then tried the larger ring on. It fit perfectly.

"I really must go down and have a talk with Grenivere, before he disappears," he said, still looking amazed, and staring at the rings.

"I - I'm afraid he's already left," said Harry. "He told us yesterday he was leaving first thing this morning. Said that he'd finished what he came here to do."

Lupin looked at Harry. "He said that, did he?"

Harry nodded. Lupin turned his gaze back to the rings again, frowning slightly. He shook his head in astonishment.

Harry looked at the smaller ring.

"I'm sure Jeanne will like it," he said. "I know she likes Starlight jewellery. Is it silver?"

Lupin smiled. "No, Harry. These are made of peritin - platinum that has been treated with dragon fire. It's one substance that holds starlight very well."

He fell silent, looking at the rings again.

Harry watched him. There was something he wanted to ask Lupin. He felt he really wanted to know, before the term ended.

"Professor Lupin?" he said. "Can I ask you something about the Marauder's Map?"

Lupin was still absorbed in the rings, and it took him a moment to reply.

" - I do beg your pardon, Harry," he said, tearing his gaze from the rings, and looking at Harry. "What did you say?"

Harry suddenly changed his mind. It wouldn't be good if Lupin found out that he had been spying on him and Jeanne using the Map.

"Oh - er, nothing," he said, flushing slightly, and trying not to look guilty. "It's not really important."

Lupin put the rings aside, and looked directly at Harry.

"No matter if it's unimportant, Harry," he said, "What is it?"

At this moment, there was a knock on the door, and Madam Pomfrey poked her head in.

"Remus?" she said, "Could I have a word with you?"

"Just give me a few minutes, Poppy," said Lupin, "I'm just finishing with Harry here."

Madam Pomfrey nodded, and shut the door.

Harry tried to escape.

"It's really nothing...we'd better not keep Madam Pomfrey waiting..."

"Not at all, Harry," said Lupin, smiling and looking at him. "Tell me what it is."

"It's - it's about the Marauder's Map," said Harry. "I was just wondering - is there any particular case when a person might not show up on it?"

To Harry's surprise, Lupin laughed, and looked extremely amused. He also looked slightly embarrassed.

"Why do you ask that?" he asked, smiling at Harry.

Harry tried very hard not to look guilty. He felt sure Lupin could see right through him.

"No particular reason," he said. "I was just wondering, that's all."

Lupin continued to look amused.

"Why, in fact, there is, Harry," he said, still smiling. "When we wrote the Map, we felt there were certain rules we should follow, to avoid it being abused should it fall into the wrong hands. The objective of showing the location of people on the Map was so that we could avoid anyone who might interfere in the particular adventure we were embarking on, that day. In particular, the Map was not meant to be used to invade anyone's privacy."

Harry felt his face going red.

"Bearing this in mind, we wrote it so that certain individuals would not show up on the Map," Lupin went on, "especially those indulging in any form of, er, - romantic activity."

"Oh!" said Harry, his face suddenly flaming red. "You mean -"

"Precisely," said Lupin. His eyes were twinkling as he looked at Harry.

Harry could feel his face getting redder and redder.

Madam Pomfrey knocked again, and opened the door.

"I don't mean to rush you, Remus," she said, apologetically, "but I'm in a bit of a hurry. This will only take a minute..."

"It's all right," said Harry quickly, "I've got to be going..."

He rose and said goodbye, as Madam Pomfrey came into the room and deposited some pieces of parchment onto the desk.

Lupin's eyes were still twinkling.

"Thank you again for the gift, Harry," he said. "Jeanne and I will see you next term."

Harry was still blushing as he left the office.

THE END

Hope you enjoyed the story! ~ Kim :o)

Read the sequel, Harry Potter and the Jade Dragon

PDF edited by Tardas

Kim's Website.

http://www.geocities.com/kim_2000rl/KimFanfic.html